LITTLE PLAYS FOR EVERYBODY. selected by

A. P. SANFORD

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LITTLE PLAYS FOR EVERYBODY

Compiled and Edited by

A. P. SANFORD

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Compiled and Edited by

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LITTLE PLAYS FOR EVERYBODY

SHORT PLAYS FOR GRAMMAR AND HIGH SCHOOLS

Selected by

A. P. SANFORD

DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
NEW YORK 1932

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THE DOOR [1]

A ONE ACT PLAY FOR CHILDREN

By

MIR-JANE STRONG

1 Included in this collection by courtesy of the author. No performance of this play may be given without payment of three dollars ($3), in advance, to Mir-Jane Strong, 835 S. Sheridan Rd., Highland Park, Illinois.

CHARACTERS

THE BOY, THE GIRL } *Who wonder.*

PANDORA: *Who knows better now.*

TROUBLES {
- MICROBE: *"Mike."*
- CARELESS: *Good-hearted, but he keeps bad company.*
- DAMAGE: *Bad company.*
- HUNGER: *She does her share.*
- GOOP THE GLUTTON: *Who has difficulty with his speech!*
- MISCHIEF: *An intriguing sprite—in more ways than one.*
- PUNISHMENT: *Never far from Mischief.*
- TEMPTATION: *She's lovely!*

THE DOOR

The scene is a room with a door—and the door is closed. It is conspicuous by its size, which is large; and by its position which is directly back center. Down stage at the right and left are two large arm chairs, and still further down stage is a library table, and on it a large, prominent vase.

At the rise of the curtain, THE BOY *and* THE GIRL *are standing side by side in the center of the stage, looking at the door, their hands behind their backs, and their backs to the audience. Slowly they turn to each other, and then look back at the door.* THE GIRL *is a little awed; and* THE BOY, *curious. Finally* THE GIRL *speaks—*

THE GIRL. (*Awed.*) What do you s'pose is in there?

THE BOY. (*Practically—and quite a little superior.*) Another room.

THE GIRL. What kind of a room?

THE BOY. Oh, just a room.

THE GIRL. (*In a hushed voice.*) What do you s'pose is IN the room?

THE BOY. (*Briefly.*) Nothing.

THE GIRL. (*A little bewildered.*) Then why do they say don't ever open that door?

THE BOY. (*Knowingly.*) Because grownups like to say "don't"— Makes 'em feel important.

(THE GIRL *is impressed and a little shocked at this heresy.*)

(THE BOY *scrutinizes the door calculatingly. Then he walks over to it, looks around to assure himself that they are alone—and puts his hand on the knob. At this point a figure appears upstage left, half in shadow—a little girl wearing*

sandals and a simple, white, square-necked Grecian dress—her hair bound in a little filet. She is breathless—she watches the boy in horror. As he puts his hand on the knob, she makes a sudden gesture as if to ward off his impulse, and one hand goes to her lips to stifle a sound. Slowly the boy turns the knob—and pushes. The little Greek figure seems to freeze with horror—but the door is locked! THE BOY *shakes his head—he might have known it would be locked! He steps back and looks the door over—he runs his hand along the edge, rattles the knob, and puts his ear against the door. Then he knocks—softly, furtively at first—then loudly and imperatively; and listens again. Nothing happens—and after a long moment of suspense, he again shakes his head and stands back contemplating the door and trying to decide on a next move. His sister, who has been watching all this with mingled fear and admiration, now comes slowly toward him, after looking cautiously around to make sure that no one can hear her, and plucks at his sleeve. He shakes her off, impatient at this interruption. But* THE GIRL *insists—she leans toward him speaking with slow distinctness.*)

THE GIRL. (*Furtively.*) I know where the key is.

(THE BOY, *who up to now has ignored her as quite insignificant, suddenly realizes that she is a person to be recognised.*)

THE BOY. (*Incredulously.*) YOU—know where the key to this door is?

(*She nods.*)

THE BOY. Where?

(*For answer her eyes slowly travel to the tall vase on the table down Right.* THE BOY *follows her glance, and then looks quickly at her to make sure he understands.*)

THE BOY. In the . . . (*He runs to the table and leaning over, peers eagerly into the vase.*) I say!—so it is! (*Suspiciously.*) How did you know?

THE GIRL. I saw some one put it there.

THE BOY. (*Suddenly suspicious again.*) How do you know it's the right key?

THE GIRL. (*Wisely.*) I know.

(THE BOY *is too occupied with his own plans at the moment to pursue the source of her knowledge. He reaches down into the vase and holds up the key. Then he looks eagerly at the door, and runs over to it. The little Grecian figure in the shadow has become more and more agitated during this scene. She watches with horror while he slowly fits the key into the lock. Half triumphantly, half fearfully, he looks back at the little girl, who is watching this proceeding from behind the protecting bulk of the big chair, Left.* THE BOY *turns the key—but before he can push the door, the little white gowned figure runs out from the shadows and bars the door with outstretched arms, facing the astonished boy, who jumps back, startled at her sudden appearance.*)

THE BOY. (*When he recovers—angry both at the interruption, and at being startled.*) Say!—What's the idea?

(*The intruding figure faces him silently, breathing quickly with excitement.*)

THE BOY. (*More annoyed.*) I say, what IS the idea? Who are you? (*Still she just stares at him.*) What's the matter with you anyway?

THE GIRL. (*Coming out from behind the chair.*) Maybe she's the little girl who lives across the street.

(*The strange child stares at them both, but does not move her arms, outstretched against the door.*)

THE BOY. (*Impatiently.*) What IS the matter with you?—Can't you talk?

THE STRANGER. I'm Pandora.

THE BOY. (*Disgustedly.*) Pandora! What a name! Pandora who?

PANDORA. (*Repeating with increased emphasis.*) Pan-

dora.

THE GIRL. (*Trying to step into the breech.*) Do you live near us? You see we don't know many children yet—we've just moved here ourselves.

THE BOY. (*In no mood for friendly overtures.*) Well, it doesn't matter who you are.—What I want to know is, what you have to do with our door, and why you're standing in front of it?

PANDORA. (*Emphatically.*) But you were told not to open it!

THE BOY. And if we want to do it anyway, I guess that's our business—it's certainly not yours!

PANDORA. (*Impressively.*) But I know!

THE BOY. (*Looking at her quickly.*) What do you know? (*Coming closer.*) Do you know what's behind this door?

(*Pandora slowly shakes her head.*)

THE BOY. (*Utterly disgusted by this time—and impatient at further interruption.*) This is just wasting time! Will you please get away from my door so I can open it?

PANDORA. (*Thoughtfully, without moving.*) A long time ago I was told not to open a big box.

THE BOY. Well, what of it?—(*Then suddenly seeing the connection.*) Did you open it?

(PANDORA *nods. There is an impressive silence.*)

THE GIRL. (*Her eyes big with curiosity.*) What was—was there anything in it?

THE BOY. Yes, what was in it?

(*Before* PANDORA *can answer, there is a chorus in reply.*)

VOICES. We were in it!

(THE BOY *turns quickly, and* THE GIRL *shrinks behind him.*)

THE BOY. (*Recovering a little from his astonishment.*) Who—(*Then after a perplexed second glance at the four very odd creatures that have appeared, apparently from*

nowhere.)—What are you?

TROUBLES. (*With obvious satisfaction.*) We're the troubles.

THE BOY. The what?

MICROBE. (*Who appears to be the spokesman in spite of his unimpressive size.*) We're some of the troubles that came out of Pandora's box. (*He bows to* PANDORA *in mocking deference and appreciation. Then, turning to* THE BOY, *he continues.*) You'll know us better in time. (*He smiles affably.*) Allow me to introduce us to you, though I assure you we are really no strangers. I—(*He pauses impressively.*) I am Microbe—not much to look at but a very important trouble, if I do say so myself. (*He coughs modestly.*) You may call me "Mike" if you like—we've been on such close terms already. I gave you the measles last Spring, and I have several other things for you in my bag. (*He pats the little black satchel he carries, in promise of future generosity. Then he stands back and surveys the other troubles with a slight air of regret and apology that they are such an anti-climax to himself.*) This rough looking chap is Damage (*He indicates a powerful, burly, ruthless looking creature who stands at the left, holding a heavy mallet.*)—A noisy fellow who does pretty well in his way. (*Turning to* THE GIRL.) He and that awkward object Careless, between them, broke your favorite doll yesterday. (*He points to the wigless, one-legged doll, limply hanging on the little girl's arm.* CARELESS, *in an attempt to acknowledge his introduction, holds out his hand, and trips over his own feet as he approaches* THE GIRL *who shrinks from him.*)

CARELESS. Well, well—you haven't always avoided me like this!

(*During this, a new figure has appeared Left. He has a huge stomach, absurdly out of proportion with the rest of him. His face is streaked with jam and frosting, and he*

stands stolidly at the side, paying little attention to the scene, so absorbed is he with the huge handfuls of cake which he keeps transferring from his bulging pockets to his more bulging face. He licks the frosting elaborately from his fingers after each handful.)

MICROBE. (*Continuing his introductions, indicates a hollow-eyed wisp of a creature, standing silently at the left.*) This is Hunger. She never says much, but she does her share. (*He nods approvingly. Then he sees that the children are staring past* HUNGER *at the cake preoccupied creature.*) That?—Oh, that's Goop the Glutton—he's harmless, but no one has much use for him.

(*At this point there is a commotion at the right, a burst of shrill laughter, and a Peter Panish little creature rushes in, looking back over her shoulder.*)

MICROBE. Well, here's Mischief— I'll warrant Punishment's not far behind!

(MISCHIEF *skips about the stage, dodging around the children and the troubles, and laughing excitedly.* PUNISHMENT *appears Right, and stops, looking for her. Suddenly she laughs and peeps at him over the back of one of the huge arm chairs where she has hidden. With a vicious crack of the cruel looking whip he carries in his hand,* PUNISHMENT *starts after her.*)

MICROBE. Oh, come on Punishment, let her alone for a few minutes!

(MICROBE *apparently has authority, for* PUNISHMENT *subsides with a surly growl about "His business."*)

(CARELESS, *who has been stumbling over every body and everything in an effort to avoid* MISCHIEF'S *flying figure, now falls heavily against the table, catches the tottering vase in his clumsy hands and finally manages to rescue it from destruction only after a breath-taking effort. This performance seems to recall* GOOP *from his earnest stuffing.*

He gives a loud, unexpected roar of laughter, pointing at CARELESS.)

GOOP. Goob burk, Car'eff! (*Try and say "good work,* CARELESS" *with your mouth full, and you will find the result is something like that.*)—(*After that effort* GOOP *resumes his cake, occasionally licking his lips, and rolling his eyes at* HUNGER, *who watches him, hollow-eyed.*)

MISCHIEF. (*Looking impishly at* CARELESS.) You'd better get away from that vase, Careless.

CARELESS. Good idea! (*He makes a sudden effort to move, trips, throws out his arms to save himself, and sends the vase spinning.* MISCHIEF *shrieks with laughter at the success of her suggestion.* CARELESS *picks up the unbroken vase and looks ruefully around for* DAMAGE.)—I say "Dam"—you come over here, and between us we can wreck this thing for good.

THE BOY. (*Rescuing the vase and holding it away defiantly.*) You keep your hands off my mother's things! (*This pleases the troubles and they chuckle and howl.* THE BOY *looks a little sheepish at his outburst, but he watches* CARELESS *and* DAMAGE, *none the less, to see that they do not carry out the suggestion.*)

(*During this excitement,* TEMPTATION *has entered, and stands leaning over the back of the chair Right, smiling at* THE BOY. *He catches sight of her, and smiles back, enchanted by her beauty.* MICROBE, *noticing this by-play, nudges* PUNISHMENT, *who is standing near him, and nods wisely.* TEMPTATION *looks at the door, which* PANDORA *is still guarding, and then at* THE BOY, *a question in her eyes.* THE BOY'S *face lights up eagerly; and then he looks doubtfully at* PANDORA'S *grim little figure, and around at the troubles. But* TEMPTATION'S *smile reassures him—and suddenly his curiosity and his desire to know the secret of the door, seem increased a hundred fold.* TEMPTATION *beck-*

ons him to follow her, and goes to the door. He joins her. GOOP *now begins to take an interest in the proceedings. He points to the door, gulps down his mouthful, tries to speak, gulps again—but before he can make more than an inarticulate sound,* MICROBE *interrupts him.*)

MICROBE. Goop, one more mouthful of that cake, and I'm going to give you the best stomach-ache I have in my satchel! And don't forget how much stomach you have to ache!

(GOOP *gives him a silly grin, and as soon as* MICROBE'S *attention is distracted, he furtively crams another handful of cake into his insatiable mouth.*)

(CARELESS *starts making his clumsy way toward the little girl, who has been standing back, Left of center.*)

CARELESS. (*Affably.*) So you've forgotten me—well, well. (*Smiles.*) Why, I made you forget to feed your canary bird —(*proudly.*) and he died.

THE GIRL. (*Suddenly blazing at him, in her anger forgetting her fear.*) You killed my poor little yellow canary bird? Oh, you horrid bully—I hate you! I hate you! (*She raises her hand to strike him but he catches her wrist.*)

CARELESS. (*Half amused, half angry.*) Why you little spitfire! And you've always seemed so fond of me. (*He pushes her down into the big arm chair Left.*) Now you had better stay there and keep quiet. It never does anyone any good to talk back to a trouble!

(THE GIRL *shrinks back into the chair.*—THE BOY *has not noticed this episode. He and* TEMPTATION *have found themselves confronted by the adamant* PANDORA, *who is still standing in front of the door.*)

TEMPTATION. (*In an alluring voice and manner.*) To think that you have been in this house all these days, and not discovered what treasures may lie behind this door!

(PANDORA *looks grim.* THE BOY *glances from one to the*

other uncertainly. TEMPTATION *smiles reassuringly.*)

TEMPTATION. (*Depreciating his fears.*) Why, what possible harm could there be in opening it? Would your mother and father have anything in the house that would be dangerous? (THE BOY *sees no fault in this logic; but* PANDORA, *who knows* TEMPTATION *from experience, makes a significantly skeptical little gesture, by removing her right arm from against the door and placing it akimbo, looking at* TEMPTATION *scornfully.*)

TEMPTATION. (*With a toss of her head.*) Oh, well, of course if you want to listen to this silly girl—(*She starts to walk away.*)

THE BOY. (*Uncertainly.*) Oh, I say—wait a minute—I haven't payed any attention to Pandora— Don't go away! (TEMPTATION *comes back with apparent reluctance. They stand looking at the door, ignoring* PANDORA.)

TEMPTATION. (*Casually.*) Why, we wouldn't get anywhere if we paid attention to all the silly don'ts grown-ups say—"DON'T speak unless you are spoken to"—"DON'T eat between meals"—"DON'T play truant from school"— Almost all the "don'ts" keep you from something pleasant—and they don't mean anything.

THE BOY. (*Pleased at this concurrence of his own opinion.*) That's what I think!

TEMPTATION. Half the time they just say "don't" to exercise their authority over us.

THE BOY. (*Delightedly.*) That's exactly what I say!—Why, if I hadn't run away from school that day, I wouldn't have seen the circus, or found the man who gave me my lucky penny!

TEMPTATION. Of course not. (*Slyly.*)—And think what you may be missing by not opening this door.

(THE BOY *is almost convinced. This is too much for* PANDORA—*she looks at him scornfully*—)

PANDORA. Oh, you foolish boy! Can't you see through Temptation? Look around you at these creatures—and think that these are only a few of the troubles that are in the world today because of my disobedience!

THE BOY. (*Defiantly.*) I don't think they're so bad—Mike seems quite pleasant—and Temptation, why Temptation's lovely!

PANDORA. Temptation! She's the worst one of them all!

THE BOY. (*Flaring up.*) You just say that because she won't listen to your nonsense about the door!

TEMPTATION. (*Calmly.*) And after all, if Pandora let out all the troubles, how can there possibly be anything else harmful in here?

THE BOY. (*Convinced.*) There can't be! (*To* PANDORA.) You're just a meddlesome girl,—and what's more—(*his voice rises*)—I'M GOING TO OPEN THE DOOR! (*He puts his hand on the knob! There is a loud knocking on the other side of the door! All turn to stare at it. There is a moment of breathless silence, which is broken by a roar from* PUNISHMENT.)

PUNISHMENT. (*To* THE BOY.) What are you doing at that door? (*After another long moment of silence, during which no one moves, he repeats in a louder voice—*) WHAT ARE YOU DOING AT THAT DOOR? (*Whip in hand he advances toward the terrified boy, and grabs him by the coat collar. Then his eye falls on* TEMPTATION, *who returns his gaze steadily, but with aversion.*) Ah, Temptation, up to her tricks! (*He looks scathingly from* TEMPTATION *to* THE BOY, *who averts his eyes.*)

TEMPTATION. (*Her lip curling.*) Aren't you being a little premature?

PUNISHMENT. That will be about all from you for the present. (*Then turning his attention to* THE BOY, *he pushes him roughly down stage. He glances at the bundle of*

switches at his side—but by a motion of his head, and a firmer grip on the big whip, he indicates that only this is adequate to deal with this offender. Just as he is about to lift it against the trembling boy, MISCHIEF, *piqued at being ignored by* PUNISHMENT, *even for a moment, runs up behind him and snatches the whip from his hand. With a furious roar he follows the laughing* MISCHIEF *off stage, Right.* THE BOY *crumples up in the other big arm chair.* TEMPTATION *looks bitterly at* PUNISHMENT'S *departing figure. Then after a contemptuous glance at* THE BOY, *she follows* PUNISHMENT *to tell him in more detail just exactly what she thinks of him for interfering with her. When quiet is resumed,* MICROBE *raises his eyebrows as much as to say "Well that is that"—then he brushes his hands together in a gesture of dismissing the commotion. As he turns, his eye falls on* GOOP, *just as the glutton is in the act of shoving cake into his ever eager mouth with* BOTH *hands.* MICROBE'S *significant glare arrests* GOOP'S *gesture, and he stands looking stupidly at* MICROBE, *both hands still at his mouth. Finally he hurriedly pushes the cake in; tries to shut his bulging mouth to conceal the evidences of his misdemeanor, and assumes an expression of exaggerated innocence. But* MICROBE'S *relentless eye is not averted.*)

MICROBE. (*With slow distinctness.*) Goop—(*With deliberate determination he begins to unfasten the little black satchel.*) Do you remember the stomach-ache I promised you? (*He rubs his hands together, his grimness changing to pleased anticipation.*) Ah, yes—and here is something to make you a little sicker—(*He holds up the enormous, conspicuously labeled Castor oil bottle, and measures with his eye, the contents.* GOOP, *at the sight of the Castor oil bottle, has very quietly sneaked off the stage, Left.* MICROBE *looks up and finds that he has disappeared.*)

MICROBE. Ho, so he expects to escape that way. (*With*

smiling satisfaction.) Nobody ever gets away from Microbe! (*He picks up the satchel and the bottle, and goes off after* GOOP. HUNGER *slinks along after them.*)

DAMAGE. (*Looking around.*) Well, the party seems to be breaking up— Speaking of breaking up— (*His eye rests significantly on the much discussed vase.*)

CARELESS. (*Who is really not such a bad fellow at heart.*) Oh, come on—leave his mother's vase alone— (*He stumbles over to where* DAMAGE *is standing left of center, and whispers something to him.*)

DAMAGE. (*His face lighting up.*) Where?—In the— (CARELESS *nods and they go off together, plotting new trouble.*)

(*The stage is silent—for both* THE BOY *and* THE GIRL *are sound asleep in the big chairs.* PANDORA *nods at them with a wise smile, and vanishes off stage Left.*)

. . . . . .

(THE BOY *stirs—he blinks his eyes stupidly—then half remembering, he jumps up and looks quickly around the room and behind the chair. Then after a quick glance at the sleeping girl, he runs to the door and stealthily but quickly takes the key from the door! Very quietly he goes over to the table. He stands for a long moment looking at the key in his hand, then at the door, and back at the key. Then with deliberate finality, he holds it up over the edge of the vase—and drops it! The key strikes the bottom with a decisive clink!*—THE GIRL *stirs. With exaggerated unconcern,* THE BOY *starts to glance through the pages of a book on the table.* THE GIRL *rubs her eyes—then she too looks quickly around the room.*)

THE BOY. (*Casually.*) You've been asleep.

THE GIRL. (*Bewildered.*) I guess I must have been! (*She looks at the door, notices that the key is gone and glances*

quickly at THE BOY. *Their eyes meet.*)

THE BOY. (*Coming around and perching on the arm of his chair, watching her intently.*) Did you dream anything, while you were asleep?

THE GIRL. (*Puzzled.*) Why,—yes—I must have—but I can't remember.

THE BOY. (*More to himself.*) Why, I can't remember—either!

(*Puzzled they both turn toward the door, and stand looking at it in the same positions they held when the play started.*)

THE GIRL. (*Turning to* THE BOY, *after a long moment.*) Maybe we'd better not open it.

THE BOY. (*Slowly.*) Maybe we'd better not.

CURTAIN

SUGGESTIONS FOR COSTUMING AND STAGING

PANDORA—*A very simple, white, square-necked costume falling a little below the knees, and made on Greek lines; short waist and crossed girdle. She wears sandals, and her hair is loosely bound back with a narrow filet.*

MICROBE—"MIKE" *should be a very small boy. He wears a very tight fitting pink suit, covered with small red spots suggesting measles.* (*The simplest way to achieve this is to tint a knitted union-suit and speckle it with red paint or crayon.*) *He wears black shoes and a tall silk hat, which with the small black satchel he carries, suggest the old general practitioner.* MICROBE'S *properties are the satchel, a huge bottle or jug conspicuously labeled* "CASTOR OIL," *and a very large ladle, slung at his belt like a sword.*

CARELESS—*His name suggests his costume, as well as his*

character—the only requirement being that nothing he wears must match— He should be a tall, gangling boy —and the costume can accentuate this by being extremely ill-fitting. His coat is on backwards; his socks are of different colors; a black walking shoe is on one foot, and a white tennis shoe on the other, making his gait even more awkward. He can't walk without tripping, or pass a thing without stumbling into it.

DAMAGE—DAMAGE *is large and powerful—and wears dark, rough clothes. If a coat of mail can be devised, his appearance will further carry out the idea of ruthlessness and combat. He carries a heavy mallet.*

HUNGER—*She is clad in gray rags. Her tattered skirt clings about her thin little bare legs, and her feet are thrust into shabby shoes, a size too large to accentuate the thinness of her ankles and legs. Her hair is unkempt and her face is gray and hollow, deep circles under her eyes. The arms and hands are scrawny and claw-like.* HUNGER'S *make-up is important as her acting consists of pantomime.*

MISCHIEF—*She wears soft shoes and a bright red suit. The illustrations for Barrie's story of Peter Pan will furnish a model—or a suggestion.*

PUNISHMENT—*This part requires a tall boy.* PUNISHMENT *stalks. He is costumed in unrelieved black. In his hand he carries a long, cruel looking whip, and hung at his belt are a bundle of switches (for minor misdemeanors), and a bunch of large keys (to the closets and rooms where disobedient children are confined.)*

GOOP—*This costume must allow for the insertion of several pillows to increase* GOOP'S *bulk; and of course there must be pockets. A mussy suit of any color will do, provided it is light colored to show the stains of jam and streaks of frosting.*

TEMPTATION—*A tall girl, she wears a graceful, flowing gown of bright green. Her hair is loose too, adding to her beauty.*

The staging is so simple as to demand ingenuity only when the troubles appear "apparently from nowhere." This can be solved by having big overstuffed chairs, behind which MICROBE *and* HUNGER, *being small, can easily conceal themselves before the play commences, and pop out at the right moment.* CARELESS *and* DAMAGE *can appear from the wings,* CARELESS, *Right*—DAMAGE, *Left.*

A last, and rather unnecessary comment—the vase, while appearing fragile, must be unbreakable!

A CHILD'S FRIENDS[1]

A PLAYLET FOR LITTLE FOLKS

By

FREDERICA LEFEVRE BELLAMY

[1] Included in this collection by courtesy of the author. For permission to produce this play write to Frederica LeFevre Bellamy, 1174 Race St., Denver, Colo.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE CHILD—*boy or girl*
SUNBEAM—*boy or girl*
BLUE-SKY—*girl*
DAISY—*girl*
VIOLET—*girl*

A CHILD'S FRIENDS

Very small children, should their voices seem inadequate, could pantomime the play, while a reader gives the text. The dancing and pantomime should in such case be done with swift, sure, continuous movement.

Costume and lighting directions are given at the end of the text.

The setting is simply a bare room, where THE CHILD *lies on a little cot. There is a door at the side opposite the cot.*

The stage is very dim at first. When SUNBEAM *peeps in at door a quick flash of light falls on her; when she enters, the light follows her, small, flickering at first, then the whole stage brightens and is flooded with amber light as* SUNBEAM *speaks.*

THE CHILD. (*Tossing feverishly, pushing tumbled hair back from forehead, moans feebly from time to time.*) Oh! Oh! (*Pause, whimpers.*) Oh, I am so sick. My head hurts. (*Pause.*) Oh, I am hot; it seems as if I couldn't breathe. It is dark and hot. (*Pause.*) No, it is cold,—dark and cold. (*Whimpers.*)

SUNBEAM. (*Calling gaily, off stage.*) Little child! (*Pause.*) O, little child, come and play! (*Pause—then anxiously.*) Where are you, little playmate? (*Nearer.*) It is morning! The sunshine is here. Come and play.

THE CHILD. (*Moaning weakly.*) It is morning. The sunbeams are calling me. I wish one would come in here. It would make me better.

(*A little light, small and flickering, falls on* SUNBEAM *each time she appears.*)

SUNBEAM. (*Peeps in at door, darts back, peeps in again.*)

Did you wish for me, little friend?

THE CHILD. (*Eagerly.*) Yes, yes, Sunbeam! Come in and play with me.

SUNBEAM. (*Darting back and forth, a little further in each time.*) Where are you? I cannot find you in this dark place.

THE CHILD. (*Stretching out arms.*) Here! Here I am. I am sick, Sunbeam.

(SUNBEAM *darts clear in, nimbly flickers back and forth till she finds* THE CHILD. *Room grows bright as she dances and speaks the verse.*)

SUNBEAM.

Over the soft green hills I play,
Calling to you in the fresh young day,
Bringing you joy and the morning light,
Bringing you songs and laughter bright.
Come, little friend, and follow my call,
Out in the sunshine God gives to all.

(THE CHILD, *watching the dancing* SUNBEAM, *smiles and sits up.*)

THE CHILD. Yes, yes, Sunbeam! Make me well so I can play with you.

SUNBEAM. (*Darting toward door.*) Come along then!

(THE CHILD *tries to follow but sinks down weakly.*)

SUNBEAM. (*Darting back.*) O, something has hurt you! You cannot follow. (*Tries vainly to lift* CHILD.) I must have help. (*Runs to door and calls.*) Blue-Sky! Blossoms! Come here!

BLUE-SKY. (*Off stage.*) Who calls to the Blue-Sky?

DAISY. (*Off stage.*) Who calls the flowers?

SUNBEAM. It is I, the Sunbeam.

BLUE-SKY. (*Softly floating in.*)

Here am I, a little Blue-Sky,
That comes to you.
What can I do?

SUNBEAM. Come, help me! The Child was here alone in the dark. I came to call her out to play, but she is weak and hurt. We must make her well.

BLUE-SKY. (*Floats over and hovers above* THE CHILD, *who now looks up smiling.*)

Dawn drives the dark away.
From all the high-arched skies
I call "Good-day!"
Flowers open laughing eyes;
Brooks dance and play;
Joyous bird-carols rise,
Bright hope I bring again,
And banish fear and pain.

DAISY. (*Off stage.*) I'm coming. (*Bounds in.*) The Violet heard Sunbeam's call and follows me, but slowly—she is such a little, timid thing.

(DAISY *dances, always arranging to face* SUNBEAM, *who is also dancing about. They lightly caress* THE CHILD.)

DAISY. (*To* SUNBEAM.) I'm not afraid to go anywhere that you go. (*To* THE CHILD.) Look up, sweet playmate! I am your friend, the Daisy.

(*Turning as* SUNBEAM *goes to stand down stage at right corner,* DAISY *faces audience.*)

Out in the fields where grasses blow
In the winds that come and whisper and go,
Proudly I raise my merry face
The course of the glorious sun to trace.
All day long I follow him so;
And the children that watch me always know

That my head is turned to the very place
The sun has reached in his daily race.

THE CHILD. Dear Daisy, your happiness makes me better. Who is that peeping shyly in at the door?

(DAISY *and* SUNBEAM *go each side of* THE CHILD *and help her to stand up.* BLUE-SKY, *standing behind, hovers over them all.* VIOLET *comes timidly forward with a shy little curtsey.*)

VIOLET.

I'm a playmate of sun and soft-falling rain.
I wait each year till it's spring again;
Then deep in clustering leaves I hide,
Till children, searching far and wide,
Find me dreaming of deep blue skies,
And smiling up at their eager eyes.

(*Kneeling in front of* CHILD, VIOLET *looks up smiling.*)

THE CHILD. (*Bending over upturned flower-face.*) How sweet you are, little Violet! Your breath of out-of-doors has made me well. I have forgotten the sickness and fever and the dark. (*Joyously to all.*) Come! Dance and play with me!

(*They join hands and dance in a circle; then separate so* SUNBEAM *can go in and out between them. As* SUNBEAM *dances,* DAISY *always turns to face her;* THE CHILD *holds out her hands;* VIOLET *bows low when approached;* BLUE-SKY *sways her cape folds, holds her arms spread.* SUNBEAM, *pausing in front of* BLUE-SKY, *points the way; the flowers lead* THE CHILD *gaily out.*)

QUICK CURTAIN

COSTUME DIRECTIONS

THE CHILD—*The sick* CHILD *wears a square-necked, knee-length, soft pink, belted tunic with elbow sleeves. Should have thick curling hair.*

SUNBEAM—*Costume should be of sateen, or crêpe paper on a muslin foundation, and should be brilliant yellow tunic, belted and edged with bands of gold. A firm close-fitting hat crown or a yellow stocking-top fitted in tight and reinforced by double head-bands of inch-wide elastic should cover back of head and support outstanding rays or sharply-pointed loops of hat wire along which are sewn single rows of gold paillet.*

BLUE-SKY—*Full, belted, angel-sleeve tunic of very bright sky-blue; full blue cape, white lined, fastened to hands so as to float out when arms are extended; costume may be trimmed with irregular scallops like cloud edges; blue and white band around head.*

DAISY—*Light green silk mull or voile tunic with crêpe-paper daisy leaves; white petals of crêpe paper or bristol board securely fastened on hat wire should stand out around face, fastened to green head covering made like* SUNBEAM'S *but should continue circle around the face by means of chin strap. Two big stiff cardboard daisies, fastened to green-wrapped or painted sticks for stems, may be carried, one in each hand, and used in dancing.*

VIOLET—*Tunic darker green than* DAISY'S, *with long, close sleeves; tiny cap of crêpe paper made to represent big violet leaves; big purple crêpe-paper petals coming forward from green covered hat crown or stocking-cap frame face and are so wired as to curve outward.*

DAISY *and* VIOLET *wear green stockings with sandal soles inside, to match tunics.* SUNBEAM, *if possible, wears*

gilded sandals; if not, goes barefoot.

THE CHILD *is barefooted.*

The children's costumes for the entire group should be of voile or organdy or silk mull, with the exception of SUNBEAM, *for whom it might be advisable to use a heavier material, like sateen.*

LIGHTING DIRECTIONS

*Very dim light from one floodlight placed outside door and covered by two layers of deep blue gelatin. When "*SUNBEAM*" speaks, throw light from an automobile spotlight with amber gelatin in front on the doorway she will enter. Flash this light when she speaks, then turn it off. When "*SUNBEAM*" enters and speaks the line "Over the soft green hills I play," etc., turn from the other side of stage a floodlight which has a deep, amber gelatin slide. Then remove one blue gelatin slide on the first flood, slip in an amber slide, and remove the remaining blue, so that the room is in a blaze of sunlight.* SUNBEAM *does not need spotlight when both floods are amber covered.*

THE FROG WITH THE GOLD CROWN [1]

By

GRACE DORCAS RUTHENBURG

[1] Included by courtesy of the author. No royalty required for the production of this play.

CHARACTERS

FLORIBEL
THE FROG PRINCE
WITCH
WITCH'S DOG

SCENE: *The dooryard of a* WITCH. *At the back are the* WITCH'S *House with a golden door, a green tree, and a glittering golden fence.*

THE FROG WITH THE GOLD CROWN

FLORIBEL *enters from the right, crying bitterly.*

FLORIBEL. (*Crying.*) Oh, oh, oh!

FROG. (*Entering from opposite direction.*) Little girl, little girl, what's the matter?

FLORIBEL. My mother is away and my seven brothers and sisters have come down with the mumps. I've come out to find mushrooms to make them a broth.

FROG. Are you sure it is mumps? Did you try a pickle?

FLORIBEL. Their cheeks are swelled up like balloons on a circus day, and I am sure they are bewitched!

FROG. Sh!

FLORIBEL. Why should I sh? My seven brothers and sisters are down with the—

FROG. You must shh here anyway, because the Witch herself lives there.

FLORIBEL. Where?

FROG. In the red red house back of the golden fence beside the green apple tree.

FLORIBEL. I don't see her.

FROG. You never can, but it's well I know where she lives!

FLORIBEL. Wait, I see a mushroom! (*She goes close to the fence.*) Two large pearly mushrooms growing over there by the fence. Queer I didn't see them as I came by!

FROG. (*Shivering with fear.*) Oh, don't put those mushrooms into your broth, Princess!

FLORIBEL. I'm not a princess. I'm just a girl. Why not?

FROG. Because, O Princess of Girls, I too ate a mushroom that grew beside the fence and now look at me!

FLORIBEL. (*Going close to him.*) For the first time I see that you are not a boy but a frog. What is it? Your voice is soft like a boy's voice. Your eyes are bright like a boy's eyes, and you wear a crown such as the King himself wears only on Sundays.

FROG. Alas, O Princess, I ate mushrooms.

FLORIBEL. And they—?

FROG. They made me what I am.

FLORIBEL. O, poor frog!

WITCH. (*Sticking her head through the door.*)

Brum! Brum! Brrrrrrum!
A mushroom's about to come.
Whenever I think
As black as ink
I grow a mushroom glum!

I'm about to sprout me some.
Whenever I fret
It's never failed yet
They grow like poisoned gum.

FROG. (*Shivering.*) Oh, what shall we do?

FLORIBEL. (*Crying.*) My seven brothers and sisters are down with the mumps and I can't find any good mushrooms!

FROG. You must find a red flower quick!

FLORIBEL. A red flower? How?

FROG. I don't know. But nothing will break the spell of a witch except a red flower with seven petals.

FLORIBEL. But I have one already in my basket! I found it coming down the road.

FROG. (*Leaping.*) Oh, good! Good!

FLORIBEL. (*Starting off.*) I'll run home with it!

FROG. (*Following her.*) Wait! Wait! One red flower isn't enough. You must have two.

FLORIBEL. There isn't another red flower between here and the river. I looked all along.

WITCH. (*Sticking her head out.*)

Doodle doodle dee,
I'm doubling up with glee,
For I've given the mumps
To seven lumps
Of luckless infancy.

Deedle deedle doo,
I've plenty of work to do,
If they find a flower
They're out of my power.
At least if they should find two

FROG. What shall we do?

FLORIBEL. (*Crying.*) What will my mother say?

FROG. (*Coming close.*) I'm only a poor frog, but my heart is at your feet.

FLORIBEL. (*Coming closer.*) I know, dear Frog, you would help me if you could.

FROG. I have nothing left but my crown. May I give you that, O Princess?

FLORIBEL. I'm not a Princess, and I couldn't take it anyway.

WITCH. (*Sticking her head through the window.*)

Gilly gilly go,
The time is short to sow.
For all my hints
The silly prince

Will never never know
How a red red flower to grow.
He would never never go
And lay flat down
His good gold crown
With jewels all in a row.

FROG. Will you not take it?

FLORIBEL. It is all you have left!

FROG. If you will not, then I will bury it behind the red red house. Perhaps the Witch might find it there and her heart would be softened.

FLORIBEL. (*Following the* FROG *as he runs off.*) You mustn't!

WITCH. (*Leaning out of the window.*)

Gilly gilly gink,
My thoughts are black as ink,
The longer I fret
The seven get
Some mumpier I think.

(*The* FROG *comes back without his crown.*)

FLORIBEL. It is gone?

FROG. (*Bravely.*) It hurt my ears anyway.

FLORIBEL. You look so different without it.

FROG. I feel so gay. My legs no longer itch to be hopping frog-like.

FLORIBEL. Has the Witch dug it up yet? Is her heart softer?

FROG. I'll go look and see. You watch in that direction. (FLORIBEL *watches, and the* FROG *hops out again.*)

WITCH. (*Letting out a fearful whoop.*) Ooooooooooooop!

WITCH'S DOG. (*Barking either on or off stage.*) Woof!

Woof! Wooooooooof! (*The* PRINCE *rushes on stage with a red flower in his hand.* FLORIBEL *turns her head and sees him.*)

FLORIBEL. Who are you?

PRINCE. I am Prince Tompkins.

FLORIBEL. What is it? Where is my poor dear frog?

PRINCE. You see before you, O Princess, the Frog. Where I buried the crown, the grass had grown together again as if a hole had never been, and over the place where I planted it a red flower had blossomed!

FLORIBEL. Prince—!

PRINCE. I leaned over to pick it, and as the stem broke, the Witch let out a yell from the middle of the red house, and all at once I jumped clear out of my frog skin and, looking down, I was myself.

FLORIBEL. (*Crying for joy.*) Oh, Prince, Prince! Let's take the two red flowers to my seven brothers and sisters and make them well.

PRINCE. (*Politely.*) Let's . . . Princess!

FLORIBEL. But I'm bound to tell you, I'm not a princess.

TOMPKINS. Never mind, you soon will be. (*They go off side by side as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

THE PINK PARROT [1]

By

MARJORIE BARROWS

[1] Included in this collection by courtesy of the author. A fee of $3.00 for the production of this play must be paid to Miss Marjorie Barrows, 1929 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, Ill.

INTRODUCING

TWEEDLES, *the littlest pirate, who blacks boots and would like to be Somebody, too.*

CAPTAIN ZIP, R. P., *the polite pirate captain who has retired from active service. He now goes in for radio.*

HE HE
HA HA } *perky pirates and retired, too.*

HO HO, *their sister, a perfect-lady pirate, who is fond of putting* TWEEDLES *in his place.*

EBENEEZER, *the very fat pirate barber, who is fond of parrots and detective stories.*

PAULINE, *his pink parrot, who can sing songs in three languages. (A crêpe-paper parrot will do beautifully.)*

MISTER BUNKEM, *the pirates' ex-landlord, who has a permanent sniff and says* "do tell!"

There can be more pirates and pirate sisters if you want them.

The pirates wear fierce-looking black cork mustaches and bandana hankies twisted around their hair. They wear swaggery, pirate costumes of black with gay red sashes around their waists. ZIP *is in scarlet with a black patch over one eye.* TWEEDLES' *black suit has many bright colored patches on it, and is not nearly so stylish as the others.*

THE PINK PARROT

WHAT YOU SEE WHEN THE CURTAIN GOES UP: *Here we are in the Pirate Barber Shoppe. The sign on the back wall tells us it is called "The Pink Parrot," and the cage dangling from the same sign, and draped with a passionate pink cover, we conclude, contains the parrot for which the shoppe was named. At the back are three barrels, upon which are seated* HE HE, HA HA *and* HO HO, *each so deep in the pirate newspapers that we can't see the tops of their heads. At the left and right of the barrels are two tall red and white barber poles of painted cardboard.*

In the foreground away to the left is a radio, where CAPTAIN ZIP *is sitting with his head phones on. Away to the right is a stool where* TWEEDLES *sits, polishing shoes that extend in a row along the right wall. In the exact center is a table filled with magazines and books on pirate etiquette. Signs on the walls tell us that this is a "Waiting Room," that there is "Barbering Here—Boyish Bobs or a Close Shave for Perky Pirates," and that "Tooth Pulling is Extra."*

As the curtain goes up we hear TWEEDLES *singing the well known pirate song to the tune of "Turkey in the Straw."*

TWEEDLES.

Avast! Belay! Heave to! Yo ho!
We've sailed the Seven Seas, you know,
But anchored here—with treasure near—
For all us quirky-perky pirates—O!

He He. (*Looking over the top of his paper.*) Keep still, Tweedles. How can I read the *Pirate News* if you keep squawking?

Tweedles. (*Eagerly.*) Singing, sir! not squawking.

He He. *Squawking.*

Tweedles. (*Faintly.*) *Singing.* (*He waits until* He He *retires behind his paper, then goes on singing, still polishing the boots vigorously.*)

Avast! Belay! Heave to! Yo ho!
We've sailed the Seven Seas, you know,—

Ha Ha. (*Peering over his paper and his glasses, and speaking in a high piping voice.*) Sh! Tweedles, Sh! You'd think to hear you that you and the rest of us were one hundred per cent pirates. And everyone knows we're only fifty per cent now that we've retired from active service. Besides, what right has just an unimportant shoe-shiner like you got to be singing, anyway? You may be disturbing Captain Zip over there with his radio.

(*As* Ha Ha *retires behind his newspaper,* Tweedles *sniffs and continues.*)

Tweedles.

But anchored here—with treasure near—
For all us quirky-perky pirates—O!

Ho Ho. (*Popping up from behind her paper.*) O, hush up, Tweedles. We found that old treasure long ago, and there's nothing more to search for. Absolutely nothing. Ho hum, life for retired pirates and their sisters on Buccaneer Bay is a bit dull now.

Tweedles. (*Pointing up to the parrot's cage.*) If you ask me, ma'am, I'd call Pauline up there our biggest treasure. That pink parrot of Ebeneezer's—she's a wonder. Maybe the folks on the mainland might not come to your

party to-night if it wasn't for Pauline.

He He. (*Laying down his paper, too.*) Oh, *do* be quiet, Tweedles! (*Turns to his sister.*) It's true, though. Our guests this evening would be scared to say they associated with pirates—even retired ones. But they're perfectly delighted to come to our party when they know they can see an accomplished pink parrot, who can sing in three languages.

Ha Ha. (*Witheringly.*) They'll call our party "scientific research." Tweedles, isn't Ebeneezer ready to give me a close shave yet?

Tweedles. No, sir, he's still busy shaving landlord Bunkem. You'll just have to wait your turn. (*He hums smilingly as he polishes the boots.*) I'm glad they're coming to-night, anyway. It gives you a chance to have a party. I *love* parties.

Ho Ho. You would.

Tweedles. (*Wistfully.*) I wish I could sit at the head of the table to-night. Next to the parrot, sir. It would be such an honor! Of course, sir, I know I can't, sir.

Ha Ha. Not much chance our Captain Zip would put his bootblack in the place of honor!

Ho Ho. Ridiculous!

Tweedles. Yes, only a bootblack. But you know, ma'am, boots are interesting. They're like people. Sometimes it takes a heap of rubbing and care and polishing to bring out their best points!

Ho Ho. That'll do. Don't sulk! Why isn't Pauline singing this morning? This is her practice hour, isn't it?

Tweedles. (*Biting his lip and trying to be brave.*) So it is, ma'am, and she ought to be practicing up for this evening. (*He jumps up and runs over to the parrot's cage.*) Pauline, dear, don't you feel like practicing now? We'd like to hear if your middle register is improving. (*There is no*

answer from the cage.) Pauline! Why don't you answer me? Oooooh!

(*He pulls up the pink ruffle before he begins his prolonged shriek that ends in a squeal. The door at the left bursts open and fat old* EBENEEZER, *shaving brush and all, rushes in, followed by* MISTER BUNKEM *who is tall and thin and who just now is decorated with a towel around his neck and a half-lathered face. These two join the other three pirates, who run over to see why* TWEEDLES *keeps on squealing. They stand around him with their fingers in their ears.*)

ALL. What's the matter? What's the matter? What's the matter?

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Muttering to himself over at the radio.*) Static—static—

TWEEDLES. Pauline! She's gone!

HE HE.
HA HA. } Gone! The parrot! Where!
HO HO.

EBENEEZER. (*Running around excitedly.*) Gone! My parrot! My beautiful Pauline! Gone! (*He sinks down on a stool, holding his head in his hands, and groans.*)

MISTER BUNKEM. Do tell! Oooooooh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*At radio, still muttering to himself.*) Static—static—

TWEEDLES. Let's ask the Captain what to do. (*He goes over to the* CAPTAIN *and taps him gently on the shoulder.*)

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Taking off ear phones.*) Beg pardon? Oh—er— What are you all staring at me for? Perfect pirates should know it's not polite to stare and—

EBENEEZER. If you please, Captain Zip, the parrot's gone.

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Looking up at the empty cage, and then around the room.*) *Gone?*

EBENEEZER. Yes sir, gone.

CAPTAIN ZIP. Well then look for her. We've got to have her for our party to-night. (*He puts on his ear phones again.*)

(*The pirates look at each other in despair, then each one nudges the other and points to the* CAPTAIN. *Finally they make* TWEEDLES *pull the* CAPTAIN'S *sleeve.*)

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Taking off his head phones.*) Beg pardon?

TWEEDLES. (*Despairingly.*) Please sir—

EBENEZER. Couldn't you suggest something for us to do?

CAPTAIN ZIP. Charmed, I'm sure. Line up now and I'll see who's *It* first to do something. (*To* TWEEDLES.) No, not you; we don't want any boots blacked now. (*The pirates line up in a row, while the* CAPTAIN *chants in a singsongy voice, pointing to each one in turn.*)

One—two—three
Snicker—eee;
Squidgy—ma—roo
Snicker—snoo;
Now I'll quit
For *you're* It.

(*He points to* EBENEEZER.) Ebeneezer! Your turn first!

EBENEEZER. (*Importantly.*) I know the way de-teck-atifs do. We must look for clues. (*Takes magnifying glass from his pocket and crawls around the floor on all fours.*) Footprints, feathers—signs of a struggle, if someone carried her away— Aaaaaah! (*He picks up a small pink feather.*) There!

TWEEDLES. (*Timidly.*) Please, sir, she shed that yesterday, when I was giving her my piece of fudge.

EBENEEZER. (*Severely.*) Shears and soapsuds! Just the same that's an excellent clue, *excellent!* (*They all applaud, and he bows.*) By the way, Captain Zip, what—er—do we

get if we *do* find the pink parrot?

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Polishing his finger nails and picking up his head phones.*) Beg pardon? Let me see— Oh, I know— you can be guest of honor to-night at the party. Sit next to Pauline at the head of the table and be cheered and all that sort of thing.

TWEEDLES. Oh!

EBENEEZER. Fine! (*Takes a tape-measure from his pocket and measures distance from door to cage.*) If anyone did go off with that parrot he could do it in three long steps. See? (*He takes the steps. They all applaud, and he bows again.*) Now I'll step outside, Captain, and *investigate*. (*He goes out at the right.*)

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Putting down his head phones with a sigh, and counting out again.*)

One—two—three
Snicker—eee;
Squidgy—ma—roo
Snicker—snoo;
Now I'll quit
For *you're* It.

(*Points to* Ho Ho.) Ho Ho! Your turn now. (*Takes out pocket mirror and looks into it as he smooths his hair again.*)

Ho Ho. (*Sitting down on* TWEEDLES' *stool and smoothing out her skirts.*) I've often heard that music is helpful at a sad time like this. I'll sing a little song, and perhaps the pink parrot will hear it and fly home again.

(*She closes her eyes and sways back and forth as she sings affectedly to the tune of "My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean."*)

Our parrot's flown over the ocean,
Her cage there is empty, you see,
Her finder, may he take the notion
To bring back our parrot to meeee!
A-lack!
Bring back!
O bring back dear Pauline to me—to me.
A-lack,
Bring back
O, bring back dear Pauline to me!

(ALL *start to applaud, but stop when she opens her eyes and mutters,* "I'm not through yet." *Then she closes them and begins to sway again.*)

O bring to this soapy sanctorum
That borders blue Buccaneer Bay
Sweet Pauline that shows such decorum;
Return our pink parrot to-day.
A-lack,
Bring back
O, bring back dear Pauline to me—to me.
Think! Think!
Of birdie (pink)
And bring back dear Pauline to me!

(*She opens her eyes and sobs into her hanky, while the rest applaud.*)

CAPTAIN ZIP. Charming song, charming. But—where's the parrot?

TWEEDLES. (*Pulling* CAPTAIN ZIP'S *sleeve shyly.*) Please, Captain Zip, if you don't want me to help find the parrot, may I go make some fudge for the party?

HO HO. Send him away—do!

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Adjusting his black patch with a swagger.*) Run along then. (TWEEDLES *goes out at the right, and the* CAPTAIN *counts again.*)

One—two—three
Snicker—eee;
Squidgy—ma—roo
Snicker—snoo;
Now I'll quit
For *you're* It.

(*Points to* MISTER BUNKEM.) You're It, Mister Bunkem.

MISTER BUNKEM. (*Wiping off soap lather.*) *Do* tell! Well, I'll go out and call her. That's the best I can do. (*Exit at right, calling,* "Pretty polly!" "Pretty polly!" "Pretty polly!")

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*To* HE HE *and* HA HA.) Do you two want to find Pauline together?

HE HE. Not with him. I'm going out by myself to look up every coconut palm on this island.

HA HA. Not with *him.* I want to win all alone. And I shall search every cave. Too bad G. Whiz is away with our private brig, or I'd go searching in that.

(*Exit* HE HE *and* HA HA *at right.*)

CAPTAIN ZIP. Ho, Ho, you'd better help fix the coconut custard and the rest of the refreshments, although we'll have to notify our guests about the lost parrot, and perhaps there won't be any party!

(*As* HO HO *leaves at the right the* CAPTAIN *sits down and tries to read. He gives it up and walks restlessly up and down, with his hands clasped behind him. At last, though, he spies his radio, seats himself, and, adjusting his head phones, is lost to the world. The stage remains silent for a moment; then* TWEEDLES *tiptoes in with the fudge pan and*

starts beating the candy with the spoon.)

TWEEDLES. (*Singing softly to the tune of "London Bridge Is Falling Down."*)

Polly, here's some fudge for you,
Chocolate, too,
Of rich brown hue;
It's yummy yum, just for your tum,
So Polly, come,
O do!

(*He repeats the stanza.*)

SHRILL VOICE FROM RADIO. Polly want a fudge. Polly want a fudge.

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Muttering to himself.*) Static—static—

TWEEDLES. (*Running over to the radio and lifting its cover or else stooping behind it.*) Oh Pauline! Poor Polly! Were you shut in there?

(*Puts parrot under coat, so that we can only see Polly's pink head—which may be wooden, papery or feathery, for all we know.*)

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Taking off head phones.*) Found the parrot? Hurrah! (*Blows whistle and all come running in.*) Pauline's found. Tweedles found her!

ALL. (*Excitedly.*) *Tweedles!*

TWEEDLES. (*Softly.*) Poor Polly! She was shut up in the radio and went to sleep. I remembered she liked fudge and always tried to come to me when she'd hear me beat it in the pan. That's what woke her up this time.

CAPTAIN ZIP. (*Putting on his head phones and waving them away.*) Run along now, and get ready for the party. Tweedles is our honored guest—remember *that*. Shut up in my radio, was she? No wonder it wasn't working well. (ALL *congratulate the happy* TWEEDLES *heartily and go off with him at the right, singing.*)

Avast! Belay! Heave to! Yo ho!
We've sailed the Seven Seas, you know,
But anchored here—with treasure near—
For all us quirky-perky pirates—O!

CAPTAIN ZIP. Static—static—

CURTAIN

THE MAGIC BASKET [1]

ANONYMOUS

[1] Reprinted through the courtesy of the National Tuberculosis Association, 450 Seventh Avenue, New York City. (Written for the Northern Division of the American Red Cross at Minneapolis, Minn.)

The People in the Play

Christopher. (*Himself.*) *He wears overalls and should be clever enough to remember all he has to say.*

Rococo. (*The friend of the children.*) *He is a big boy, somewhat athletic. He can tumble about, for he wears a clown suit.*

The Basket People, *you know as* Milk, Carrot, Beet, *and* Tomato, *in paper romper costumes.*

Soap, Toothbrush, Egg. *They are in pasteboard.*

The Tempting Trolls. *Their names are* Coffee, Green Banana, Chewing Gum, Cucumber *and his brother* Pickle, *who walks a little bent, head forward. They are in stiff paper.*

Candy. *Peppermint, striped, of course, with long fingers, gloved like stick candy.*

THE MAGIC BASKET

Where the Play Is

This play may be acted out-of-doors. It is really in a forest on the edge of fairyland. You can see a huge basket with red crosses on it, sort of like a market basket, sort of like a fairy basket. Your eyes tell you that it is painted wood and pasteboard, so you decide that it must be a little house. It is about three feet high, with a huge Red Cross, and resembles the ones carried by the health clown. It stands against a small step-ladder, or a chair with a stool on it, so that the Basket People *may make their entrances as if they were popping out of the basket. There is no other scenery.*

What You See

While you are watching the fairy forest and wondering about the magic basket, which is so big and funny that it might be a wee house, a frail, small boy stumbles by, hurrying, half crying. He sits down under a tree, very much disturbed. You can tell that he is running away to be alone and that he is angry. He rolls on his tummy and begins to cry. His name is Christopher, *and he makes you feel sorry.*

Then, hopping, skipping, with a comical gait like a circus clown, a curious figure trips on the scene. He looks like a circus clown, except that he has red crosses on him. In one hand he has a carrot and an egg, in the other a bottle of milk. He suddenly stops in front of you and juggles these things in the air, once or twice, while

you hold your breath. CHRISTOPHER *half raises himself to peek at him, but buries his face again as the clown turns and tosses into the basket the carrot, the egg and the milk bottle, biff! biff! biff! Then he does a few more jolly steps and, just like a magician, he pulls out of the air a tooth brush, which he pretends to use, up and down, before he tosses it into the basket.* CHRISTOPHER *peeks. Then* ROCOCO, *the clown, still prancing, plucks a cake of soap out of the air and pretends to give himself a good scrubbing before it, too, goes, pop! into the basket.* CHRISTOPHER *hides.* ROCOCO *spies him. In exaggerated high-stepping quietness, he goes over to* CHRISTOPHER *and tries to rouse him.*

WHAT YOU HEAR

ROCOCO. Bless my Red Cross buttons! What have we here? Who's come to visit Rococo? Some human child seeking health and happiness and the road to loving service?

CHRISTOPHER. Go 'way! Go 'way! (*He kicks and strikes out, his face hidden.*)

ROCOCO. (*Mimicking him in a high voice and jumping up and down.*) Go 'way! Go 'way! Who tells Rococo, the friend of the children, to go away from his fairy forest in the land of the magic basket?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Breaks down and sobs.*) Boo! hoo!

ROCOCO. (*Jumping up and down and mimicking him in a high voice.*) Boo! hoo! Boo! hoo! (*He makes believe crying in such a loud, horrible tone as he gallops around the stage that* CHRISTOPHER *sits up and begins to laugh.* ROCOCO, *too, begins to laugh on his last gallop around. Then he stoops and speaks gently.*) Now, come! Tell Rococo all about it.

CHRISTOPHER. They went without me. They left me alone.

Rococo. Alone! Alone? When Rococo, the friend of the children, is with you?

Christopher. Well, they've all gone to the games to compete with Nigh Town. All the swift boys and the strong boys. All the racers and the jumpers. I am so little. I can neither hurl a ball nor run like the prairie wind. I begged them to let me come. They said, "Go back to your doll babies! Only the strong can fight for Our Town." They piled into the motor and sped away. They laughed at me because I am not strong as they are.

Rococo. (*Thinks hard with his hand to his brow.*) Now, let me see if I have this straight. You are weak. Your friends are strong. You, too, would be strong so your mates would be proud of you and so that you could bring honor to your home people. Am I right? Like this? (*He stretches his muscles.*)

Christopher. (*Jumping up, and feeling the muscle in his arm.*) Yes, yes. How firm you are—like the powerful oak!

Rococo. (*Pretends to measure* Christopher *and shakes his head disapprovingly.*) Rococo can tell you how to become strong, yet he cannot help you unless you choose yourself. Will you promise to do as all athletes do?

Christopher. Yes, yes. Of course, I promise.

Rococo. Then, no ice cream, sodas, no pickles, no candy between meals, no indigestibles such as green bananas and greener cucumbers. Sleep with your windows open, rise early, drink a glass of water when you get up and before each meal.

Christopher. (*Who has been getting more and more disgusted.*) No! No! You talk like a school nurse. I thought you would make me an athlete. I won't do all those silly things.

Rococo. (*Starts to stroll away, glancing back over his*

shoulder.) All right. Rococo is the friend of the children. If you don't care to do as my other friends do, I must say goodbye. Goodbye.

CHRISTOPHER. I promise. (ROCOCO *strolls farther away with a funny walk.*) I promise. (CHRISTOPHER *runs after* ROCOCO *and pulls him back.*) Please show me. I promise.

ROCOCO. (*Jumps around and leads him to a spot where he motions him to stand still.*) The basket people will help you if you will make them your friends. I will summon some of them, one at a time. Now, ready! Watch Rococo. (*He begins to moo like a hungry cow.*)

(*Then watch, because in answer to his call* MILK *rises out of the Magic Basket and jumps to the ground stiffly and bobs to* ROCOCO *who returns her salutation in kind, and then she approaches* CHRISTOPHER. *He is hugging his knees and staring wonderingly at the bottle of* MILK *which he is almost sure looks just like the one* ROCOCO *tossed into the basket a few minutes before. He is not certain, however, because* MILK *can talk.*)

ROCOCO. Milk, can you help Christopher to find the way to strong manhood?

MILK. I am Milk, the perfect food, designed for girl or boy; I'll bring you pep and ruddy cheeks and bodies full of joy. So drink me down three times a day, as robust children should, and I in turn will make you glad that I'm the perfect food.

ROCOCO. There, you see? Thank you, my dear. (*He whistles three long hard whistles.*)

(CARROT *pops out of the top of the Magic Basket followed by* BEET *and* TOMATO, *two Fat Looking Vegetables.*)

ROCOCO. Carrot, don't you think that the Vegetable Family can help Christopher to grow strong?

CARROT. I must say the carrot sisters are plumb full of iron and salts.

BEET. So am I.

TOMATO. So am I.

CARROT. We keep you young and active and we temper sluggish faults.

BEET. So do I.

TOMATO. So do I.

CARROT.

We tempt the fickle appetite
With other foods, we make for might.
You'll find that Carrot's a delight.

BEET. So am I.

TOMATO. And I.

ROCOCO. Let's dance a little dance for him, to show that we are just as jolly as the Tempting Trolls.

ALL. (*In shocked tones.*) Trolls!

(*Nevertheless, they dance a folk dance*—CARROT, BEET *and* TOMATO, *daintily, and* ROCOCO *in burlesque while he whistles.* MILK *and* CHRISTOPHER *are amused.* ROCOCO *stops them before they are through and whistles a shrill call, just as if he would burst.* SOAP *and* TOOTH BRUSH, *hand in hand, appear.*)

SOAP and TOOTH BRUSH. (*Together.*) We are the Cleanliness Twins, we two.

SOAP. Scrub, my brother, scrub.

BOTH. Vanquishing violent germs we do.

TOOTH BRUSH. Up and down, you rub.

BOTH. Bathe, if you wish to be clean and bright.

SOAP. Scrub, my brother, scrub.

BOTH. Brushing makes teeth always glisten white.

TOOTH BRUSH. Up and down, you rub.

(ROCOCO *pretends to brush his teeth up and down; forgets and goes across.*)

ALL. No, no. (*Remembers to do it correctly.*)

ROCOCO. I know someone else— EGG. (*He begins to crow like a rooster. A very tiny girl garbed as an egg comes to the top of the Magic Basket and prepares to jump.*)

ALL. (*Screaming.*) Don't! Don't! You'll break!

ROCOCO. (*Lifts her down and leads her to* CHRISTOPHER.) Egg, you tell this boy how to be big.

EGG. (*A very little girl, you remember, says these large words.*)

Medium, soft or three minute,
Scrambled or omelette or raw,
An egg with the nourishment in it,
Makes boys grow up strong like papa.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Puts his arm about her.*) I like you. I like like all of you. The things you tell me to do are so simple that I am ashamed to be a weakling.

(TEMPTING TROLLS *rush on the scene.*)

ALL. (*Exclaiming in alarmed voices.*) The Trolls! The Trolls!

TROLLS. Do you like us? (*They tease him, pulling at him.*)

CANDY.

Gumdrops, lollipops, chocolates and licorice,
Peppermint, taffy, and sweet rich creams!

COFFEE.

Black strong coffee, choose me for your breakfast,
I will dull your memory and drug it with my dreams

GUM. Chew me! Chewing gum! I'm a vulgar fellow.

BANANA. Eat me! Banana! See! I'm hard and yellow.

CUCUMBER. I dare you to try Mr. Cucumber Cu, I'll give you tummy ache.

PICKLE. Pickles! Me, too!

ALL. Christopher, you like us, don't you? We can give you pleasure—we serve your delicate taste. (*They pull at*

him again. The BASKET PEOPLE *stand around to protect him.*)

CHRISTOPHER. Rococo, help! Help! I do like them. But I like your people, too.

ROCOCO. You must choose. The Tempting Trolls bring you delights soon forgotten. They cannot make you an athlete as the Basket People can. Choose.

CHRISTOPHER. I choose you. I do want to be strong and have my friends proud of me. I choose Rococo and his friends from his Magic Basket.

COFFEE. I don't care, I know a stupid boy, he likes coffee.

CANDY. I don't care, I know a silly girl; let's spoil her complexion.

CUCUMBER. I don't care, I know a greedy lad; let's ruin his digestion. (*They run nosily away.*)

MILK. Dear Christopher, since you have chosen to be my lifetime friend, I have a gift for you and you shall have others like it every day in the year.

CARROT. And some of the vegetable family will come to you each day. We must tell Spinach, Sister Beet. (*As she speaks* MILK *steals away.*)

TOOTH BRUSH. Up and down, remember. Never across. This is for you. (*Gives him a tooth brush. The vegetables have disappeared.*)

SOAP. Plenty of water is my motto. Scrub, brother, scrub. (*Gives him a cake of soap.*)

ROCOCO. (*Does a couple of stunts while* TOOTH BRUSH *and* SOAP *vanish, then he bursts into noisy laughter.*) Do you know what to do when you feel blue instead of crying? Ha! Ha! Ha! (*He laughs in such a clownish way that* CHRISTOPHER *joins him.*)

CHRISTOPHER. Ha! Ha! Ha!

ROCOCO. That's the right answer. Laugh. Just laugh.

(*The Magic Basket walks away, much to your surprise,*

just to show its magic, and Rococo *disappears in a couple of cartwheels.*)

Christopher. Am I dreaming? How stupid of me. I ran away because the boys said I was too weak and puny to go to the games at Nigh Town. I thought a jolly clown showed me the way to be strong like other boys. But no. It must have been real. How else could I have this milk, and this egg and this carrot and these things? I must tell Rococo, the friend of the children, that I will do everything he wants me to. Rococo! (*He calls for the clown.*) Ro-co-co! Ro-co-co! (*He too runs off stage carrying his health gifts, in search of the fairy clown.*)

And that is all of the play.

PHANTOMS [1]

A PANTOMIME FOR HALLOWE'EN

By

FRANCES ELIZABETH ATCHINSON

[1] Included by courtesy of the author, Mrs. Francis Elizabeth Atchinson, 3002 St. Paul St., Baltimore, Md. There will be no royalty charged for the production of this play.

CHARACTERS

DAVID, *a boy of eight years*
MARY, *his sister, about six years old*
TOM, *their black cat, also King of the Black Cats*
PUMPKIN MEN
GHOSTS
BLACK CATS
WITCHES
QUEEN OF THE WITCHES

PHANTOMS

THE STORY

There was once a little boy named DAVID. He had a sister, MARY. They lived in a tiny house at the edge of a wood. It was an enchanted wood, especially on Hallowe'en, but the children did not know it. DAVID and MARY had a big black cat called TOM, that they were very fond of, and he was just as fond of them.

One day the children went to town with their mother and father and spent all their pennies for the funniest purchase. What do you think it was? Why a catnip mouse for TOM.

While they were gone TOM had wandered into the Enchanted Wood. He was lonesome for the children, and besides, it was Hallowe'en and no self-respecting cat, particularly a black one, would stay tamely by the fireside when such amazing things were happening among the dark trees.

DAVID and MARY were so pleased with their purchase that they could hardly wait to get home to give it to TOM. When they arrived they ran out immediately to call their pet, but he was nowhere to be found. The children ran farther and farther into the wood, peering under bushes and behind trees, and calling, "Tom!" "Tom!" "Nice kitty." "Come, Tommy." "Here, old fellow."

Sometimes they thought they saw him, but when they ran to the bush or tree where he seemed to be, there was no TOM in sight. All this time DAVID and MARY were getting farther and farther away from home, and deeper and deeper into the Enchanted Wood. It was quite dark, too.

Suddenly the children were surrounded by fearsome crea-

tures, who had huge yellow heads with lights gleaming at their eyes, noses and mouths. They were the PUMPKIN MEN who roamed the Enchanted Wood on Hallowe'en night. The CAPTAIN OF THE PUMPKIN MEN announced to his band, "These children are in our power for one hundred and one years, as we have captured them on Hallowe'en night!"

"Hurrah!" yelled his followers.

"What shall we do with them?" the CAPTAIN asked.

"Make them our slaves to keep our candles lighted and our heads polished," suggested one of the PUMPKIN MEN.

The rest liked this idea very much, and clapped their hands. They crowded around the children, holding their pumpkins toward them. DAVID and MARY began polishing them at a great rate. When this was done to the satisfaction of the PUMPKIN MEN, they danced a stiff, jerky dance around the children.

Their gambols were interrupted by blood-curdling yells as a troop of GHOSTS swooped down on them. The PUMPKIN MEN were very much afraid of the GHOSTS, and dashed away to the left.

The GHOSTS then seized DAVID and MARY, and their Chief declared, "These mortals cannot escape from our ghostly clutches for one hundred and one years. What is your pleasure with them?"

Up stepped the youngest GHOST, and said, "Let them be given my task of mending the ghostly robes. I'm sick and tired of slaving from morning until night while you are flying around the country and getting your garments torn again. I only manage to have a little fun once a year, on Hallowe'en."

All the GHOSTS nodded their approval. They held up their robes to DAVID and MARY, who mended them. Then they did a swishing, sighing kind of a dance around the children.

In the midst of it were heard ear-splitting "Meows" as

the BLACK CATS dashed in and surrounded them. The GHOSTS lived in mortal terror of the BLACK CATS, so they took to their ghostly heels and flitted away.

The BLACK CATS were delighted to have captured the children. Said one, "These children shall rub behind our ears and stroke our fur the *right* way for one hundred and one years!"

All the Cats liked this idea, and pushed and jostled each other to be nearest the children, who stroked and rubbed them with a will.

"We must see what our absent King will do with them," suggested one.

The rest didn't like this suggestion, for they were enjoying their rub so much, so they hissed at this Cat and arched their backs in anger, and he had to slink away. Then the Cats began prancing and leaping around the children in a most ferocious cat-dance, which frightened poor DAVID and MARY more than ever.

The BLACK CATS were so absorbed in their pranks that they did not notice the WITCHES silently creeping up, until each WITCH whacked a Cat over the back with her broomstick. The Cats leaped straight into the air with a terrified "Meow" each, and then got down and crawled off in the funniest, most shame-faced way imaginable.

The WITCHES now gathered around the children. "We shall use these unfortunate wretches to hunt for toads and snakes and eels to make our magic potions," one declared.

"Not so," shrieked another. "We'll teach them our tricks."

"Old Mop-handle," screamed a third, "We'll do nothing of the sort. Who wants to teach them tricks? We'll pinch 'em and make 'em cry, that's what we'll do!"

"Well, whatever we do with them, let's not take them to our Queen, and thus lose such fine slaves. She'd like as not

set them free, she's that tender-hearted," suggested a third.

"Yes, yes," they all cried, "We'll not tell the Queen."

Just at that moment the forest glowed with a red light, and there stood the QUEEN OF THE WITCHES in their midst, stirring a mixture in a huge kettle over glowing coals. She was very angry.

"You vile wretches," she cried. "You would plot not to tell your Queen of these children! I've half a notion to change you all into bats and owls."

The WITCHES were terribly frightened at this and threw themselves at her feet, and begged for mercy.

"Get up, creatures," the QUEEN snapped. "At least, you can't have these children. This much of your punishment is certain. Now, who will claim them?"

In ran the PUMPKIN MEN. "The children first belonged to us," they shouted.

Then the GHOSTS flitted silently in and began to moan and shriek, and say, "We conquered the Pumpkin Men. The children belong to us, us, us—ooooOOOOO!"

With leaping and bounding and meowing the BLACK CATS entered. "Meow, meow, meow! Who scared the Ghosts away? We! MeowwW!"

The WITCHES screamed, "We overcame the Cats, we did!"

"Be quiet," the QUEEN ordered them. "You have lost your chance." Then, turning to the CATS, "You Black Cats, the children are yours. You have won them fairly."

On hearing this the CATS leaped into the air and rolled on the ground for joy. The King of the Cats then stepped up. He was none other than TOM! The children recognized him immediately, and ran to pet him, begging him to set them free.

"You must pay a ransom," said TOM, sadly. "I have no power to help you otherwise."

The children had no money, however. They turned their pockets inside out to show KING TOM that it was quite true, and finally MARY remembered the catnip mouse. "Will this do for a ransom, dear Tom?" she asked.

TOM turned to the Cats. "Will you accept a catnip mouse for these two children?"

"Meow, meow, purr, purr, yes, yes!" answered his Cats, with delight.

So DAVID and MARY gave the mouse to TOM, who threw it to his Cats. They went almost mad over it, falling on top of each other, rolling on the ground and turning somersaults.

"Now that you children are safe you might as well join in our revels," said the QUEEN. "Would you like to? Not many mortals have seen our Hallowe'en dances."

"Yes, we'd love to stay, thank you," said DAVID, who was a polite little boy. MARY curtseyed. She was very shy.

Then MARY and DAVID, the QUEEN and TOM, and all the PUMPKIN MEN, the GHOSTS, the CATS and the WITCHES joined hands and danced round and round the fire and the steaming kettle, and had a glorious time.

THE END

COSTUMES, LIGHTING, AND SCENERY

The PUMPKIN MEN wear black suits, close-fitting caps, and black masks, and carry lighted pumpkin heads in their hands. As the stage is quite dark when they are on it, the black costumes seem to fade into the background, and the grinning, lighted pumpkin heads to be without bodies.

The stage has a green light for the GHOSTS and for the BLACK CATS.

The BLACK CATS wear union suits dyed black, black mittens on their hands, and black stockings. They have tight-fitting caps with up-standing ears, and wear cat masks on their faces. Tails can be made my dyeing rope black. A red light is used when the WITCH QUEEN appears.

The set is a wood, with the door of a cottage on right wing. The play can be given out of doors very successfully, in which case the cottage can be dispensed with. The WITCH QUEEN and her kettle can be concealed behind a high, pointed rock, which opens when she appears. The fire can be made of red tissue paper concealing light bulbs. If a few sticks of incense are lighted and put into the pot just before the rock opens, realistic and safe smoke will result.

Music for the Pantomime is from the OUVERTURE of ALESSANDRO STRADELLA by F. von Flotow, published by G. Schirmer.

JACK O'LANTERN INN[1]

By

MARJORIE BARROWS

[1] Included in this collection by courtesy of the author. A fee of $3.00 for the production of this play must be paid to Miss Marjorie Barrows, 1929 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, Ill.

INTRODUCING:

MRS. WITCH, *who is a Good Witch, and doesn't care who knows it. She wears what she is supposed to.*

JACK, *her husband—that's all. He wears a pumpkiny head, scarecrowy clothes and a sweet smile.*

THEIR CHILDREN:

THE LITTLE WITCHES, *three or more of them, who take after their mother with peaked hats, black capes, broomsticks and everything.*

THE HALLOWEEN ELVES, *three or more somersaulting little elves with pumpkiny heads. They have inherited the family snore and they take after their father—and that isn't saying much.*

THE REAL CHILDREN:

PHOEBE *and* PHIL, *who are dressed in comfy play clothes and are just as old as you think they are.*

JACK O'LANTERN INN

WHAT YOU SEE WHEN THE CURTAIN GOES UP: *Jack O'Lantern Glen, which is really just a nice cornfield with several corn shocks here and there, and a black rail fence in the background with a black velvet cat and a stuffed owl perched on it. In the back, a little to the right, is Jack O'Lantern Inn. It is made like any other stage hut except its orange cardboard front is shaped like a huge jack o'lantern, whose mouth makes a good door and whose eyes make good enough windows for any witch. There is a sign on the Inn that reads,*

JACK O'LANTERN INN—AN APPLE A DAY—NO CORES ACCEPTED

And here, as the curtain goes up, comes JACK, *himself, eating an apple, and stretching and yawning between bites.*

JACK. (*Flopping down beside a comfortable corn shock, and stretching out his ten fingers, on each of which is tied a different colored ribbon.*) Ten-nine-eight-seven-six-five-four-three-two-one—one! (*Pauses, then tries again faster.*) Ten-nine-eight-seven-six-five-four-three-two-one! What *was* it that this one was to remind me to remember? (*Another pause.*) Oh, yes, the alarm clock, of course! (*He yawns again and goes on tiptoe into the Inn, soon returning with the alarm clock, which he winds and places beside him while he stretches back against a corn shock.*) Of *course!* How stupid of me to forget that that was to remind me to remember the alarm clock. (*He turns over, and begins to snore oh, so loudly!*)

(MRS. WITCH *now comes out of the Inn, sweeping the ground with her broom and singing as she sweeps to the tune of "Sweet and Low."*)

When the horned owl hoots in the cypress tree,
And the black bat blunders by,
When the purple dusk is drenched with musk
And the Harvest moon rides high,
Then a wisp of wind goes OOOOoooooooo
Till perky pumpkins prance
On Halloween, on Halloween
And witches wake and dance!

(*Suddenly she spies* JACK—*she was singing too loudly to hear his snores—and gives him a playful poke with her broom.*)

MRS. WITCH. (*Impatiently.*) Drat! Jack! Scat!

(JACK *remains snoring peacefully;* MRS. WITCH *claps her hands twice and immediately, from behind the corn shock that* JACK *is using for a pillow, somersault three or more* HALLOWEEN ELVES.)

FIRST ELF. (*Hopping up and down.*) What *is* it, Mother? Can't the other witches and elves come to our party?

SECOND ELF. (*Tugging at her skirts.*) What *is* it, Mother? Have the cats lost their miaow? Won't the moon be turned on tonight?

THIRD ELF. (*Wringing his hands.*) What *is* it, Mother? Oh, *haven't* we enough apples to go round?

MRS. WITCH. (*Calmly.*) Turn out your toes and don't chew up your words! It's just your Father. He's gone asleep again. Wake him up!

(*The* HALLOWEEN ELVES *scamper behind the corn shock and soon come back, one with a box labeled "pepper," which he sprinkles under* JACK'S *nose, one with a sprinkling can which he pours on* JACK'S *face, and one with a Halloween*

horn which he blows in JACK'S *ear.*)

JACK. (*Sitting up suddenly, with his fingers in his ears, sneezing and shivering.*) Stop it! Ka-chew! Brrrr! Kachew! Stop it! You little imps, you! I'll teach you to wake up your Father that way! (*He starts to chase one around the corn shock, and* MRS. WITCH *pulls his coat tails and holds him back.*)

MRS. WITCH. (*Soothingly.*) There, there, Jack, I told them to do it. I couldn't wake you myself. Where are those apples I sent you for?

JACK. (*Looking meekly at the strings on his fingers and pulling out an apple core from his patch pocket.*) Apples, my dear? Black cats and broomsticks, my dear, what about 'em?

MRS. WITCH. (*Anxiously.*) Oh, Jack! Think hard. You're *so* forgetful! What did you do with the basketful I gave you to put in the storeroom? It's not there now.

JACK. (*Shaking his head sadly.*) Bless my Halloween horn and beanblowers, my dear, I *can't* think what I did with them!

MRS. WITCH. (*Taking off her peaked hat and fanning herself impatiently.*) But all the reformed witches are coming to our Halloween party tonight, and we *must* have those apples. Stand on your head a moment, Jack; you generally remember better that way.

(JACK *obligingly tries to stand on his head and counts ten-nine-eight-seven-six-five-four-three-two-one again. Then he jumps up and down excitedly.*)

JACK. I remember now, my dear! I remember!

MRS. WITCH. (*Eagerly.*) Well?

JACK. (*Holding out the core.*) See? I ate 'em up!

MRS. WITCH. Oh, *Jack!* All of them?

JACK. Yes'm—every single one of 'em. Here's the last core!

MRS. WITCH. Oh, Jack! How *could* you forget that tonight's Halloween and we've sent out all those invitations and what *will* those witches think of me giving a Halloween party without apples! Why, there won't be any to duck for or peel and tell fortunes by or—oh deary me, why we simply *must* find some more. Black bats and beetles, we *must!*

ELVES. (*Excitedly.*) We simply *must!*

MRS. WITCH. (*Shooing them off with her broom.*) There, there! Run along now and don't interrupt me. Turn out your toes and don't chew up your words!

(*The* HALLOWEEN ELVES *scamper away but remain where the audience can see them. One pokes his head around the corner of a corn shock, and the other two peer out of the two round windows in Jack O'Lantern Inn. All three fall asleep and snore—just like* JACK.)

JACK. (*Starting to lie down again.*) I daresay the witches won't mind. I'm sort of sick of apples, myself.

MRS. WITCH. (*Indignantly.*) I daresay *you* are. You've eaten every single one of those that I saved and saved. Just think of all those silly animal roomers I've rented roms to—just to earn those apples that *you* ate!

JACK. I'm sorry, my dear, but what can we do now? They'll be here in just about an hundred owl's hoots from now. (*He starts to wind his alarm clock again.*)

MRS. WITCH. Wait a moment, Jack! Don't go to sleep yet. There are those apples of Farmer Jim's. I heard him say this afternoon that he didn't want that treeful and that anyone could have 'em. (*Claps her hands twice and the three* HALLOWEEN ELVES *wake up and come running out to her.*) Get your lanterns and go with your Father. Help him bring the apples from Farmer Jim's tree. Let's see now. Are you all dressed for the party?

ELVES. Yes, Mother. All dressed up!

MRS. WITCH. Nails clean? Ears scrubbed? Fresh hankies?

(*She inspects them as each one turns around, waving a clean handkerchief.*)

ELVES. Yes, Mother.

MRS. WITCH. Well, I do hope you'll be a credit to me. Remember now, only *one* helping of Halloween hash—and say *please.*

ELVES. (*Turning somersault.*) Yes, Mother. We'll remember!

MRS. WITCH. (*Laughing.*) Well, run along—all of you. And be *sure* to bring back those apples!

(JACK *and the* ELVES *pick up small Jack O'Lanterns and hurry off the stage.* MRS. WITCH *starts sweeping again, humming the Witches' song. Suddenly she stops, lays down her broom and starts hunting for something. Then she claps her hands three times and out from behind the other corn shocks pop three or more cunning* LITTLE WITCHES. *They've been there all this time only you and I never knew it.*)

LITTLE WITCHES. (*Running up to* MRS. WITCH.) Yes, Mother? What is it, Mother? Do you want something, Mother?

MRS. WITCH. (*Fanning herself with her hat again—she is that upset.*) I can't find my magic spectacles. And how am I going to make the Halloween hash without *them?*

LITTLE WITCHES. (*Running around, making broomstick circles in the air and searching everywhere.*) We'll find them, Mother.

FIRST LITTLE WITCH. They're not in the Inn.

SECOND LITTLE WITCH. They're not behind the corn shocks.

THIRD LITTLE WITCH. Why, there they are! Right on your forehead!

MRS. WITCH. (*Laughing with the others.*) Well, well! Run along now and fetch me the cookbook and the kettle. We've no time to lose!

(LITTLE WITCHES *bring her a kettle which they set on a tripod. Then they hand her a big spoon and her fat cook-book, and one by one bring out cups filled with all sorts of wonderful things—that you and I can't see but that witches can.*)

MRS. WITCH. (*Stirring kettle with her big spoon.*) One cup of strawberry ice cream, one cup of buttercup sundae, a pinch of rose-petal pie and a dash of chocolate chips—there, that's all. Just think what some children who read old-fashioned fairy tales *think* we eat—bats and mice and all sorts of horrid things! Now let's leave the hash to hash as hash should hash. Run into the house and clean up. It's a quarter to Halloween now. Hurry!

(*All scamper into Jack O'Lantern Inn and the stage remains deserted for a moment. Not a sound is heard. Then suddenly the stuffed owl cries, "Too-wit! Too-woo!" and the black velvet cat, "Mee-ee-aw!"—at least it sounds as though they do. A second later* PHIL *comes tiptoeing out from behind the corn shock to the left. He peers around and tiptoes back calling, "Phoebe!" very softly. Then* PHIL *comes back again, holding a reluctant* PHOEBE *by the hand.*)

PHIL. There's no one here, Phoebe. I looked!

PHOEBE. Yes, but here's a pot. And a house, too. So they'll come back. And I'm—I'm sort of scared. It's Halloween. There may be witches here.

PHIL. Pooh! I'm here. No one can hurt you while I'm here!

OWL. (*Suddenly.*) Too-wit! Too-woo!

PHIL. (*Dodging behind* PHOEBE'S *skirts in a panic.*) Wh—wh—at's that?

PHOEBE. (*Giggling.*) It's just an owl.

PHIL. Oh! (*Sniffing.*) My, that stuff in the pot smells good. I'm awf'ly hungry.

PHOEBE. Well, we must hurry home and take Mother

those apples that Farmer Jim gave us. She'll make us a pie with some. I'm sure she will. And we can duck for the others.

PHIL. (*Looking around.*) It looks witchy. Sort of.

BLACK CAT. Me—eee—a-a-ow!

PHOEBE. (*As she and* PHIL *start back suddenly.*) It's only a black cat. But you're right, Phil. There might be some of those awful witches we're read about here and—

PHIL. Sh-sh! Quick, let's hide. They're coming!

(*Voices are heard both at the left and at the right. The children look around quickly for a hiding place and rush for a corner corn shock where they crouch—unseen by those on the stage, but just where you and I can see them perfectly. They are just in time—for* JACK *enters from one side and the* ELVES *from the other.*)

JACK. Bats and screech owls! By the black cat's whiskers! It's good to get back to one's own pumpkin-sweet-pumpkin.

ELVES. So it is! (*They start playing leapfrog at one end of the stage.* MRS. WITCH *and the* LITTLE WITCHES *come out of the Inn.*)

MRS. WITCH. (*Humming.*) When the horned owl hoots in the cypress tree—(*Breaks off.*) H'lo Jack-O. Where are those apples?

JACK. (*Standing on his head.*) Let's see. Oh, yes, they were gone. Some children took 'em. Tried to catch *them*—but I couldn't.

MRS. WITCH. Oh *dear!*

LITTLE WITCHES. Oh *dear!*

ELVES. (*Mimicking.*) Oh *DEAR!!*

JACK. I just wish I could have *caught* 'em!

PHIL. (*From corn shock.*) Ka—chew!

PHOEBE. (*Who can't hold back any longer, either.*) Ka—chew!

(JACK, *the* ELVES, MRS. WITCH *and the* LITTLE WITCHES

rush to the corn shock, of course, and pull out the frightened children.)

JACK. Here they are! By the horned owl's hoot! The very children who took the apples! Let's tickle 'em!

ELVES. Let's tickle 'em *hard!!*

LITTLE WITCHES. Let's!

MRS. WITCH. Here now! Don't forget yourself! Howdy do, children? Welcome to Jack O'Lantern Inn. This is Jack and my family, and I'm the missus.

PHOEBE and PHIL. (*Very scared.*) How-do-you-do-Mrs.-Witch-we-are-very-well-thank-you-and-we-hope-you-are-too.

MRS. WITCH. Thanks. What did you do with those apples? May we have them?

PHIL. They're just outside in the woods.

PHOEBE. But—but—we want them ourselves—awf'ly. It's Halloween, you know. And we promised Mother we'd bring something nice home. And she wanted apples I'm pretty sure and—

PHIL. We promised. And she'll be expecting us back now —so Goodbye!

(*He edges to the left.*)

MRS. WITCH. Wait! We are going to have a party in just two owl's hoots from now. Halloween, of course, is the witches' birthday. We need your apples. They're yours, of course, and as we are *good* witches and elves—(*She pauses to stare severely at* JACK *over her spectacles.*) we wouldn't think of taking them away from you. But—

PHIL. They're ours. We want 'em!

PHOEBE. Excuse me! (*She whispers in her brother's ear. He frowns but at last nods. Then they both run off stage.*)

JACK. They're gone! Why didn't you tickle the children while you had them—and take their apples away?

MRS. WITCH. (*Sighing.*) How often must I tell you, Jack, that we *must* play fair? And NOT tickle. We'll just have

to get along without those apples—but all those witches I've reformed certainly will be upset!

LITTLE WITCHES and ELVES. (*Drying their eyes with their hankies.*) Boo-Hoo.

(PHOEBE *and* PHIL *run back, pushing a cart of apples.*)

PHIL. Here they are. We've decided just to play good tricks this Halloween!

PHOEBE. We're sure Mother would want you to have them. We'll find something else for her!

MRS. WITCH. (*Clapping her hands.*) Now our Halloween will be perfect!

ELVES. (*Bowing.*) Perfect.

LITTLE WITCHES. (*Kissing them.*) Perfect!

JACK. (*Sighing.*) Perfect—but I'd like to have tickled 'em, though.

MRS. WITCH. (*Feeling in her many pockets.*) Let's see now if I can't find some little something or some little something-or-other for *you.* (*Pulls out two gilt spools tied with a gilt cord.*) Here's a radio—just a two-spool set. If the battery didn't need recharging I'd tune in the Cricket Symphony and let you hear it. (*Pulls out a cap from another pocket.*) Here's an invisible cap that needs mending. Next time I catch hold of a darning needle flying by I'll darn it. (*Pulls out a mirror from another pocket.*) Here's what you want—a magic mirror. It's a little cracked but it's still working.

PHIL. How does it work? What does it do?

MRS. WITCH. Shows you how nice everyone is—inside. Some folks can't see how other folks are good and kind, you know, and clever underneath. But if you look in the mirror and think of them you'll see for yourself.

PHOEBE. (*Peeping in.*) Why, you look real kind and pretty and—

MRS. WITCH. Well, I tried hard to be a bad story book

witch once, myself—you know, a credit to the witches. But when I looked in this mirror and saw how good I was—well, I became discouraged.

JACK. Then she decided to *be* as good as she *was*—and she made all the other witches good too.

MRS. WITCH. All I did was to show 'em in the mirror how good they really were.

PHOEBE. But—don't you want the magic mirror yourself?

MRS. WITCH. (*Shaking her head.*) Certainly *not*. The mirror only helps at the start. You'll soon find you don't need it if you just look *hard*. And you'll have lots more fun when you see how nice everyone really is.

JACK. (*Dishing out some hash.*) Have a dish of Halloween hash before you go?

PHIL. (*Tasting it.*) Yum! Yum! We'll never be afraid of witches again.

PHOEBE. Thank you lots. We must go now, but we'll remember. Good-by!

ALL. (*Lining up in a row and waving their hankies to the children as they disappear.*) Goooooooooooood-byyyyyyyyyyyyyy!!!

BLACK CAT. Mee-a-ow!

OWL. Too-wit! Too-woo!

JACK. (*Looking at string on his thumb.*) Well, *they're* gone. Now what was this string to remind me to remember? (*Stands on his head.*) Oh, yes—our Halloween party!

MRS. WITCH. And it's time for *that* to begin. Come, children. Suppose you practice your dance until our guests arrive!

LITTLE WITCHES and ELVES. (*Joining hands and dancing around* MRS. WITCH *and* JACK, *singing.*)

When the horned owl hoots in the cypress tree,
And the black bat blunders by,

When the purple dusk is drenched with musk
And the Harvest Moon rides high,
Then a wisp of wind goes OOOOoooooooooooo
Till perky pumpkins prance
On Halloween, on Halloween
And witches wake and dance!

CURTAIN

PETER PUMPKIN FACE[1]

By

MARION HOLBROOK

[1] Included by courtesy of the author. For permission to produce apply to Miss Marion Holbrook, 189 Waverly Place, New York City.

CHARACTERS

Bobby Pumpkin
Sally Pumpkin
Paul Pumpkin
Sam Pumpkin
Polly Pumpkin
Peggy Pumpkin
Peter Pumpkin
Jack Frost
Autumn Leaves
The Witch
Tommy, the Witch's Cat
The Baker
Jack
Joan

PETER PUMPKIN FACE

The scene is Farmer Brown's field in which seven pumpkins have just finished growing. They are all big, plump pumpkins with the exception of one which is quite small. The pumpkins are resting quietly on the ground, wondering if something exciting won't happen to them soon, because a pumpkin's life may be very gay around Hallowe'en time. Suddenly a group of autumn leaves comes skipping about in front of the pumpkins. With them is Jack Frost. The leaves catch hands and dance around Jack Frost, or they may form several small circles and dance, singing:

Autumn leaves so gay are we,
Drifted from the maple tree.
Blow, wind, blow! off we go—
Up and down so merry O!
Tra, la la la la la la
Tra la la la la la la
Tra la la la la la la
Tra la la la la la la.
We are jolly leaves at play—
Gold and red and orange gay—
Blow, wind, blow! off we go—
Round and round so merry O!

This is sung to the "Hansel and Gretel" dance in "Twice 55 Games with Music." Jack Frost chases the leaves who dodge among the pumpkins, laughing gleefully. He soon tires of the game and the leaves gather in groups at right and left of the pumpkins.

JACK FROST. Ho! Seven fine pumpkins!

BOBBY PUMPKIN. Pardon me, you mean *six* fine pumpkins.

JACK FROST. (*Counting.*) One, two, three, four, five, six, *seven.*

SALLY PUMPKIN. But only six *fine* pumpkins.

PAUL PUMPKIN. We don't count our little brother Peter.

JACK FROST. (*To* PETER.) Oh, are you Peter Pumpkin?

PETER. Yes, I'm Peter Pumpkin. Who are you, sir?

JACK FROST. (*Bowing.*) Jack Frost.

(*The pumpkins are all excited when they hear this.*)

POLLY PUMPKIN. Then it must be autumn.

JACK FROST. Of course it's autumn.

PEGGY PUMPKIN. Then we'll soon be pumpkin pies!

ALL THE PUMPKINS. Big, round pumpkin pies!

SAM PUMPKIN. All except Peter.

BOBBY PUMPKIN. Or Jack o' Lanterns!

ALL THE PUMPKINS. Jolly, bright Jack o' Lanterns!

PEGGY PUMPKIN. But not Peter. He's scarcely good for anything.

(PETER *ducks his head in shame. He hates to be such an insignificant pumpkin. But his brothers and sisters are so proud of themselves that they sing.*)

We might be spicy pumpkin pies,
Rich pumpkin pies, sweet pumpkin pies!
But better still than pumpkin pies—
We might be Jack o' Lanterns!

No one would scorn to be a pie,
A golden pie, a luscious pie,
But in our pumpkin hearts we yearn
To be fine Jack o' Lanterns!

(*This is sung to the tune of "Muffin Man" in "Twice 55 Games with Music."*)

JACK FROST. Whichever fate you meet—good luck to you! And good luck to you, little Peter Pumpkin.

PETER PUMPKIN. Thank you, sir.

JACK FROST. Come, leaves! Blow, wind! We're off!

(*Immediately the leaves begin their dance again. They dance in circles for a moment and then skip off, singing as they go. When they have gone,* THE WITCH *is heard approaching with her cat. "He, he, he!" she laughs in a high shrill voice. And her cat,* TOMMY, *replies, "Meow! Meow! Meow!" The pumpkins crane their necks to see her coming.*)

PUMPKINS. The witch!

(*And in comes* THE WITCH, *hobbling on a stick, followed by her black cat.*)

WITCH. What's this I hear about pies and Jack o' Lanterns? What's all this about six fine pumpkins?

POLLY PUMPKIN. We are just saying what fun we shall have on Hallowe'en.

WITCH. He, he, he! My gracious me! Don't you know that Hallowe'en is tonight?

PUMPKINS. Tonight!

WITCH. Certainly it is. We're off to a witches' revel now, aren't we, Tommy?

TOMMY. Meow! Meow! Meow!

BOBBY PUMPKIN. Have you heard what's to become of us tonight?

WITCH. Nary a word.

PEGGY PUMPKIN. If you should meet anyone along the road, be sure to tell him that there are six fine pumpinks in this field.

WITCH. Six? Do my old eyes deceive me or do I see *seven* pumpkins, Tommy?

TOMMY. Meow! Meow! Meow!

SAM PUMPKIN. You see seven but only six of us are good

for anything. Our little brother Peter is too small.

SALLY PUMPKIN. But we six would make elegant Jack o' Lanterns.

WITCH. He, he, he! My pretty ambitious pumpkins! (*She hobbles away.*) Come, Tommy, or we shall be late.

TOMMY. (*As he follows her off.*) Meow! Meow! Meow!

PAUL PUMPKIN. (*Calling after her.*) You won't forget us!

WITCH. (*Out of sight.*) He, he, he!

TOMMY. (*Out of sight.*) Meow! Meow! Meow!

BOBBY PUMPKIN. Hurray! Hallowe'en's here and we're going to parties with real boys and girls at last!

SAM PUMPKIN. What a handsome Jack o' Lantern I shall be!

SALLY PUMPKIN. And how I shall shine in the dark and make the children laugh!

PETER. Oh, couldn't I be a lantern, too?

PEGGY PUMPKIN. No, you forget. You're much too small.

BOBBY PUMPKIN. It's a great pity you didn't grow up like we did. It will be such fun.

PETER. (*Sighing.*) Yes, I shall probably become a mere pie.

PAUL PUMPKIN. I do hope you fall into the hands of a good cook, Peter.

SAM PUMPKIN. It is quite respectable to be a successful pie. But if you should sink in the middle and have a damp crust, think of the indigestion you would cause.

PETER. Oh, dear! I'd hate to give the children stomach aches! Oh, how I wish I had grown up!

PEGGY PUMPKIN. Hush! Here comes someone.

(THE BAKER *enters.*)

BAKER. Pumpkins! Ah, just what I need for my Hallowe'en pies! (*Pointing to all the pumpkins except* PETER.) I'll take this one and that one and this one and that one and

this one and that one, but (*pointing to* PETER) *that* one is too small to bother with. What delicious pies I shall have! I can smell them now!

PUMPKINS. (*In discouraged tones.*) Pies!

BAKER. Come, my fine pumpkins, come with me.

(*The* PUMPKINS, *all except* PETER, *slowly surround the* BAKER, *their heads hanging. He sings this song, sending the pumpkins out on the last verse.*)

What fine yellow pumpkins,
Mellow pumpkins,
Mellow pumpkins,
What fine yellow pumpkins
For my Hallowe'en pies!

My crust shall be flaky
Shall be flaky,
Shall be flaky,
My crust shall be flaky
For my Hallowe'en pies!

Come, haste to the oven,
To the oven,
To the oven,
Come, haste to the oven,
My Hallowe'en pies!

(*The reluctant pumpkins are bowed out by* THE BAKER *who follows them.* PETER *is left alone in the field. The tune for the* BAKER'S *song is "The Primrose Ball" in "Twice 55 Games with Music."*)

PETER. Oh, dear! Oh, dear me! What an unlucky pumpkin I am. Oh, me! Oh, my! I feel so sad.

(*And there he sits, looking very sad indeed. And then* JACK *and* JOAN *come across the field.*)

JACK. Here's the pumpkin! Right where Grandpa said it was.

JOAN. What a nice *little* pumpkin! Just the right size.

JACK. Let's give it a face right away and put the candle in and light it.

JOAN. Let's give it a nice grinning face.

(*They kneel down before* PETER *and when they get up the little round pumpkin has been turned into a Jack o' Lantern.*)

JOAN. Isn't it the nicest Jack o' Lantern that you ever saw?

JACK. It has a jolly look about it. It seems to like us.

PETER. (*Jumping up.*) I do! And I'm the happiest fellow in the world. Once I was Peter Pumpkin, the smallest and most miserable pumpkin that ever grew on a vine.

JACK. But now you're Jack o' Lantern.

PETER. (*Taking each child by the hand.*) I'm Jack o' Lantern! Was there ever such a lucky pumpkin as I!

(THE WITCH *and* TOMMY *and* JACK FROST *and his* LEAVES *come dancing in and everyone dances, singing the following song.*)

Hallowe'en's a jolly night,
Ho, for pranks so merry!
There is many an elf about,
Goblin, witch and fairy.
Tra la la la la la la,
Tra la la la la la
Tra la la la la la la la,
Tra la la la la la.
See our Jack o' Lantern bright
In your window grinning!
Funny round little pumpkin face—
Don't you think him winning?

(*This is sung to the tune of "The Flora Dance" in "Twice 55 Games with Music." At the conclusion all disappear.*)

NOTES

Cornstalks and autumn leaves make an attractive setting for this little play.

The children representing pumpkins have pumpkins cut from cardboard, suspended from their necks, front and back. The large pumpkins should be made in different shapes, some tall and some very round. At the beginning of the play the children are seated on the floor with the pumpkins held up before them and their heads showing.

PETER PUMPKIN *has a Jack o' Lantern face with orange paper showing through the cut-out eyes, nose and mouth, behind the pumpkin which he wears. When* JACK *and* JOAN *kneel down, hiding him from the audience, they simply place this face in front of the pumpkin.*

JACK FROST *wears a white sleeping garment over which artificial snow has been sprinkled.*

THE AUTUMN LEAVES' *costumes are plain brown slips, slashed to the waist at the sides and quite short. Ragged pieces of cloth in all the shades of maple leaves in autumn are sewn all over the slips in irregular fashion. Brown bloomers and brown stockings complete the costume.*

THE WITCH *wears the usual black witch's dress with high pointed hat.*

THE BAKER *wears a white cap and apron.*

JOAN *and* JACK *wear out-of-door costumes appropriate for autumn.*

THE FIRE GHOST[1]

By

MARGARET MOCHRIE

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CAST

TONY	TOM
BARBARA, his sister	NORA
FRED	BETTY
PENELOPE	JOHNNY

THE FIRE GHOST

SCENE: *It is Hallowe'en. The action takes place in the summer camp of* BARBARA'S *and* TONY'S *mother. The house is a fairly large one—more like a cottage than a camp —in the woods on the shore of a lake. The scene is the main room of the house. In the center of the back wall is a fireplace in which a cheerful fire is burning. To the right and left of the fireplace are doors, leading into the kitchen and into one of the bedrooms. On the right and left walls are curtained windows. A table, with a pile of magazines and a bowl of apples stands in front of the right-hand window, a chair in front of the one at the left. Before the fireplace is a low bench, and cushions are scattered about on the floor. A lamp stands on a small table close to the fireplace, a little to the right, and there is a candle, unlighted, on the mantelshelf. There is a basket of logs at the left of the fireplace.*

When the curtain rises TONY, PENELOPE, NORA, FRED, BETTY *and* JOHNNY *are seated on the cushions around the fireplace.*

NORA. Where's Tom?

TONY. He and Barbara went into the kitchen for the marshmallows and some sticks to toast them on.

JOHNNY. Good! I love marshmallows.

PENELOPE. I love having a Hallowe'en party here in your house in the woods. It's more exciting than having one at home.

BETTY. My mother said that your mother's very brave, Tony, to have eight of us here to spend the night. She says

she'd be afraid we'd get into mischief.

TONY. I guess my mother knows we wouldn't. We have sense enough to take care of ourselves. Why, my mother even left us here alone tonight. She had to go across the road and get some eggs from Mrs. Bailey for breakfast. That's how much she thinks we need watching.

JOHNNY. Of course, *we* don't, Tony. But Tom and Nora and Penny are only eleven and—

NORA. I'm just as smart as you are, Johnny. So there!

JOHNNY. (*Doubtfully.*) Well-l—

(*The door to the left of the fireplace opens and* BARBARA *and* TOM *enter. She carries three long sticks and he a huge box of marshmallows.*

FRED. Here are the marshmallows. Give me a stick, Babs. Come on.

PENNY. No, give me one. Such a rude boy, Fred, always wanting to be first.

BARBARA. Tom gets one stick because he helped me find them. Penny and Betty can have the other two. Then they can all pass them to the rest of us after they've toasted one marshmallow.

(TOM *puts the box on the bench, takes a stick, puts a marshmallow on the end, seats himself on the bench and holds his stick over the fire.* PENNY *gets up and sits beside him with her stick.*)

TONY. (*Putting his hand in the box and pulling out several marshmallows.*) I like them just as well raw. (*He stuffs them in his mouth.*)

JOHNNY. (*Following* TOM'S *example.*) I do, too. I wouldn't be bothered cooking mine. You can eat more this way.

(TOM *draws his stick out of the fire, but before he can take his marshmallow off,* FRED *seizes it and puts it in his mouth.*)

TOM. Hi, there! I cooked that for myself!

FRED. Aw, you can do another.

TOM. Is *that* so! Well, just for that . . .

(*He springs at* FRED *and smothers his head in a cushion.*)

JOHNNY. Atta boy, Tom! He won't be so fresh next time!

FRED. Let me go! You're squashing my nose.

TOM. All right. But remember, I get your marshmallow.

NORA. That's right, Tom. Make him do one for me, too.

TOM. Keep out of this, Nora. It's my business. What do you say, Fred?

FRED. Give me air! Sure, I'll do you a marshmallow. I was going to, anyway.

(TOM *removes himself and the cushion from* FRED *and hands him the stick.* FRED *puts a marshmallow on it and toasts it.* PENNY *eats her marshmallow and hands her stick to* NORA. BETTY *gives hers to* BARBARA. BARBARA *and* BETTY *sit on the bench. The rest, except* PENNY *and* TOM, *sit on the cushions.*)

TOM. I think I'll eat an apple.

(*Goes to table at right and takes one.* PENNY *follows and pulls back curtain at the window to look out.*)

PENNY. Oh-h-h! It's a regular Hallowe'en. So dark and spooky out. I think I see something moving out there. Maybe it's a ghost!

TOM. A ghost? Don't be silly. Here, let me look. (*He pulls back the curtain further.*) I can't see anything. Here, give me one of those matches on the table.

PENNY. Mrs. Carter said we weren't to light any matches.

TOM. I know how to light matches. (*With his back to the audience he pretends to strike the match and then peers out the window.*) I don't see anything.

BETTY. Tom, you know you shouldn't light matches. Put it out. (*She appears to blow match out.*)

NORA. Wait till I tell Mother, Tom. Mrs. Carter said especially not to play with fire and you—

TOM. (*Coming to fireplace.*) Oh, all right! You'd think we were babies. (*Throws match in wood-box.*)

BARBARA. Look out! There may be some paper in there.

(*A loud moan is heard outside. It might be wind, but it sounds almost like a human voice.*)

PENNY. What's that? (*She runs over near* TONY *and* BETTY.)

NORA. I heard it, too. A funny groaning sound.

JOHNNY. Just because it's Hallowe'en, you get scared of a little wind.

BARBARA. (*Looking at* TONY.) Tony, do you think it could have been—

TONY. Of course not. There aren't any ghosts.

BETTY. Ghosts? What do you mean, Babs?

BARBARA. Well, there's a ghost that's supposed to haunt the country around here, and I thought that might have been he groaning.

JOHNNY. Ha, ha, ha! She believes in ghosts. That's funny.

TONY. (*Laughing.*) Yes. But then, girls always—

BARBARA. Why, Tony Carter! You believed in old Zeke yourself when Bill Bailey told us about him. You know you did. You even dug up the garden for the gold!

FRED. Gold? Who found any gold? (*Hands marshmallow to* TOM.) Here's your goo, Tom. I hope you choke on it. (TOM *eats marshmallow.*)

TONY. Nobody did. They say old Zeke buried it right around here. His shack stood where this house is built. Anyway, it's different, looking for gold, Babs. That's real. Ghosts aren't.

NORA. I—I—don't know. When anyone talks about ghosts I get sort of scared. One night I thought I saw one, but it was only Mrs. Carey's wash shining in the moonlight.

TOM. I remember. You screamed that night. I thought somebody was murdering you.

JOHNNY. Well, I don't believe in ghosts. But what about this gold, Tony? Why didn't you tell us this summer so we could try and find it? Maybe it's under the house.

FRED. Let's dig for it tomorrow.

TONY. Fat chance! We have to leave here at seven o'clock to get back home in time for school. It takes nearly two hours to drive back to town.

BETTY. Tell us the ghost story, Babs. Hallowe'en's just the right time for it.

BARBBARA. I don't think I ought to. You'll all be scared.

FRED. Scared! Me, scared! That's a joke!

BARBARA. But it's a real ghost story. It really happened.

TONY. (*Skeptically.*) They *say* it did. But you can't be sure. It was fifty years ago, Bill Bailey says.

JOHNNY. I'd rather hear about the gold. Gold's useful. You can buy things with it—airplanes and automobiles and racing boats, and—

BARBARA. But this ghost is useful, too. He saved the Abbotts and the Baileys and some other people from fires.

FRED. A spook fire-alarm! That's a good one!

BARBARA. All right, if you're going to make fun of the ghost, I won't tell you about him.

BETTY. Go ahead, Babs.

PENNY. Oh-h-h! I feel so creepy! I know there aren't any ghosts, but just the same, they scare me.

(*The boys laugh.*)

TONY. Oh, no! There aren't any ghosts, but they scare her! Ha, ha! (*He rocks with laughter and leans near the fire. The moaning sound is heard again.*)

BETTY. Be careful, Tom. You're too close to the fire. A spark almost caught your sleeve then.

NORA. I heard it again! I heard it!

BARBARA. So did I. The same moaning. It *was* Zeke.

TOM. (*Getting up and looking out the window.*) Nothing but the wind.

TONY. Of course not, although—

JOHNNY. Although, what?

TONY. Never mind. Tell the story, Babs.

BETTY. We ought to have the light out. It will be more thrilling.

PENNY. No! Don't turn out the light.

JOHNNY. 'Fraid cat. There's enough light from the fire. See! (*He turns out lamp. The room is in darkness except for the firelight.*)

BETTY. Now, Babs.

BARBARA. (*Talking in a hushed, tense voice.*) Well, old Zeke Baldwin lived about fifty years ago in a shack right where this house is now. He was awfully queer looking, with long, scraggly hair and skinny fingers and he was supposed to be a miser. They say his fingers were always dirty, as though he'd been digging, and that was because he used to dig up his gold every night and count it, and then bury it again. He hardly talked to anyone. Every Saturday morning he went to the village store to buy food for the week. The rest of the time he tended the little garden he'd made in the clearing.

TONY. Some people said he buried his money in the garden and only dug it up on moonlight nights, and others said he put it under the floor of the cabin. He might have sat and counted it right where Nora is sitting now.

(NORA *screams.*)

FRED. Go on, Babs.

BARBARA. There wasn't many houses around here then. There wasn't even the road, just a trail through the woods that led from the village to Zeke Baldwin's shack.

TOM. This isn't so exciting yet. I'd rather play that

mirror game.

BARBARA. It's exciting enough later on. But if you don't want me to go on, why—

BETTY. Of course we want to hear it. We'll play the mirror game afterwards, Tom.

PENNY. I won't go in a dark room and look in a mirror! Not after all those groans.

FRED. Aw, keep still! I want to see where the ghost comes in.

BARBARA. One Saturday Zeke didn't go to the store for his provisions, and the next Saturday he didn't appear, either. One man, Bill Bailey's grandfather, thought it was queer and he came out along the trail to see if Zeke was sick. When he got here he found the shack burned to the ground. Zeke was burned, too.

NORA. Oh!

TOM. Why didn't he run out when the place took fire?

TONY. Nobody knows. They think he must have been hurt or sick or something and that he couldn't get out. Some people say he went back to dig up the gold that was under the floor.

BARBARA. The fire must have started just before a heavy rainstorm, or the whole woods would have been burned. Anyway, Zeke was dead, and though they hunted and hunted, no one ever found any trace of his gold.

FRED. I'm still waiting for the ghost.

BARBARA. I'm coming to that. You see, Zeke was killed by fire. And now his ghost appears when there's a fire or when there's danger of one.

JOHNNY. I don't believe it.

BARBARA. But it's true. A little while after Zeke died, Bill Bailey's grandfather built the farmhouse across the road. One night his wife was wakened by a tapping at the window. It was just as if long bony fingers were beating on

the pane. She didn't think much about it and was going to sleep again when the sound came once more, much louder this time, and with it a groan, Bill said, that made her blood creep. She woke her husband and he got up. The first thing he saw was a red glow near the barn. The woodpile had caught fire. Bill's grandmother was sure Zeke's ghost woke her up to warn her.

BETTY. Is it true, Tony?

TONY. That's the way Bill tells it. He says the same thing happened again several years later. Some people camped in the field next to Abbott's farm. It was a dry summer and the grass was parched. One night, just after the campers had left, Mr. Abbott heard a loud moan, then another. He looked out of the window and saw the field blazing. If he hadn't discovered it then, the woods all around would have burned—all because the campers didn't see that their fire was really out before they left. Mr. Abbott said it was Zeke who moaned and wakened him. I don't know.

BETTY. It probably was the wind, just as it was tonight. The trees make moaning sounds lots of times, and tap on window-panes, too.

BARBARA. But maybe it wasn't the wind, tonight. You remember when we heard the moaning? The first one came when Tom threw the match in the woodbox and I said 'Look out. There may be paper in there!'

NORA. That's right. And the second came when Tony's sleeve was near the fire. Oh, it *must* have been the ghost!

JOHNNY. Has anyone else heard Zeke besides the Baileys and the Abbotts?

TONY. When Mrs. Alden first went to the camp across the lake, she heard a terrible groaning one morning. It seemed to come from somewhere near the kitchen. She went downstairs and saw her new hired girl all ready to pour kerosene

on the wood in the stove to make it burn. Everyone said that was Zeke, too.

BETTY. Why, Tony! You sound as though you believed in the ghost.

TONY. Of course, I don't. Only—

JOHNNY. It was the wind. It was the wind every time! The fires just happened.

PENNY. I don't think it was the wind. I know that ghost is walking around now.

NORA. Oh, it makes me shiver. Turn on the light!

BETTY. You make me mad, with your old ghosts. Come on, let's play the mirror game. (*She turns on the lamp.*)

FRED. All right. Where is there a mirror?

BARBARA. (*Pointing toward bedroom door, left of fireplace.*) In there.

BETTY. I'll go first.

TONY. I'll get the flashlight. (*Goes over to table at the right.*)

JOHNNY. You mustn't use a flashlight. You've got to play this game with a candle. Here's one. (*Takes candle from mantel-shelf.*)

TONY. All right. (*Picks up box of matches and approaches* JOHNNY.

BARBARA. You know what Mother said, Tony. She told you not to touch any matches or light any candles while she was out. Let's wait until she comes back. Then we can play the mirror game.

TONY. Oh, I'm not a child and neither is Betty. (*He hands her the candle and goes through motion of lighting it but does not actually do so.* TONY *and* BETTY *are standing with their backs to the audience.*) Hold that in front of you and look in the mirror and you'll see your future husband looking at you over your shoulder.

NORA. I only hope you don't see Zeke.

BETTY. Don't be a goose! (*Goes into bedroom.*)

PENNY. I wouldn't do that for—for—anything!

BARBARA. Betty's never afraid.

JOHNNY. What's there to be afraid of? The dark can't hurt you, and the moaning of the wind can't hurt you and the—

(*There is a tapping sound at the window, then a long wail.*)

NORA. Barbara! Barbara! There it is again! I heard it!

FRED. I did too!

PENNY. Oh!

(*There is a piercing shriek from the bedroom.*)

TONY *and* JOHNNY. (*Rushing in.*) We'll get him! Hold on, Betty!

PENNY. Oh, I *knew* something would happen! I'm sure that ghost grabbed Betty. (*Clings to* BARBARA.)

(JOHNNY *and* BETTY *come out together. Both look frightened.*)

BARBARA. Oh, Betty! What was it?

BETTY. I—I tripped and the candle fell out of my hand and then I heard that terrible tapping and moaning. Oh—h! (*She drops on a cushion.*)

JOHNNY. The flame had just caught the ruffle of the curtain when we went in.

BARBARA. Oh, Tony shouldn't have disobeyed and lighted that candle!

TONY. (*Appearing at door.*) It's all right now. I smothered it in the bed quilt.

PENNY. We might all have been burned up, Tony Carter.

NORA. And Zeke's ghost warned us. He warned us three times. Now do you believe in him, Betty?

BETTY. I—I don't know. It's queer.

JOHNNY. Aw, it was the wind.

TOM. It sounded awful. I hope it doesn't howl that way

again.

BARBARA. It won't. I'm sure it won't if we're careful about fire. It only comes when there's danger of something burning. You wait till Mother sees that curtain, Tony!

TONY. How was I to know Betty'd fall and drop the candle? You'd think it was all my fault. Who put out the fire, I'd like to know?

BARBARA. But you wouldn't have had to put it out if you hadn't diso—

TONY. All right. I know I shouldn't have given Betty the candle and I know the house might have burned up, and I know Mother'll have a lot to say to me, too. There! Are you satisfied?

JOHNNY. Gee, for a minute I thought Betty had seen old Zeke!

PENNY. I thought you didn't believe in ghosts, Johnny.

JOHNNY. I don't. Who said I did?

FRED. Ha, ha! He says he doesn't believe in ghosts, but he thought Betty saw one. Ha, ha!

BARBARA. Anyway, I hope Zeke doesn't have to warn us again.

NORA. I'll think of him, and I'll always be careful about fire.

PENNY. Me, too. All except Tony.

TONY. What do you think I am, foolish! I don't need Zeke to tell me to be careful. Do you suppose I want to get burned up? Not me!

BETTY. Then we all agree. "Carefulness keeps Zeke away."

JOHNNY. Aw, foolishness! It was only the wind!

CURTAIN

(Note: *The fire can be made by electric flashlights or bulbs covered with red paper. The doors need only be openings in the curtains which form the back and sides of the room. Windows may be represented by hanging white or cretonne curtains. It will be easy to fashion the fireplace of a light wooden framework covered with crêpe paper to represent brick or stone.*

SILVER BELLS AND COCKLE SHELLS[1]

By

MARION HOLBROOK

[1] Included by courtesy of National Recreation Association. For permission to produce apply to Miss Marion Holbrook, 189 Waverly Place, New York City.

CHARACTERS

Four Gardeners
Mistress Mary
Roses
Daisies
Pansies
Pinks
Two Axemen
Fairy
Pretty Maids
Silver Bells
Cockle Shells
Neighbors

SILVER BELLS AND COCKLE SHELLS

SCENE: MISTRESS MARY'S *garden in which nothing has been planted. The play is intended for outdoor presentation against a bckground of shrubs, but may be presented indoors against a plain curtain.*

The FOUR GARDENERS *enter carrying rakes and hoes. They sing the following song and at the close perform a country dance.*

GARDENERS' SONG

(Tune: *The Hamburg Fair*)

We are gard'ners to the last degree!
We know the species of each flower, vine and tree!
We are quick, keen and wary—
We work for Mistress Mary
Who you may have heard is contraree!

(*At the close of their dance they rake and hoe at back.* MISTRESS MARY *enters. She sings her song and may do a few prim steps.*)

MISTRESS MARY'S SONG

(Tune: *The Chinese Fan*)

Oh, I'm Mistress Mary, they say I'm contrary!
I think it malicious to say that of me!
I know what I want, all else I dismiss,
To contradict me is—remiss!

(*She makes a cross face.*)

I am quite hard to please when I make up my mind,
And no alterations will suit me, you'll find.

But when I am pleased, I've no prejudice—
I'll smile quite freely—like this!
(*She smiles.*)

MISTRESS MARY.

Ho, gardeners, come and speak with me!
Say how shall my garden be.

(*The* GARDENERS *reply very respectfully.*)

FIRST GARDENER. We thought that daisies might be nice.

SECOND GARDENER. And pinks would lend a touch of spice.

THIRD GARDENER. And pansies—for their pleasant faces.

FOURTH GARDENER. And roses—for their charming graces.

MISTRESS MARY. These flowers four I wish to view.

FIRST GARDENER. One moment—they will dance for you.
(*He goes to the entrance to summon the flowers.*)

Roses, pinks and daisies merry,
Pansies, dance for Mistress Mary!

(*The flowers enter dancing and at the end of their dance they curtsy and stand in little groups at back.* MISTRESS MARY *remains very stiff and displeased throughout their dance. She plays with her fan and shows great indifference. As* MISTRESS MARY *mentions the different flowers they droop their heads.*)

MISTRESS MARY.

There's nothing duller than a daisy,
And spicy perfumes make one lazy.
I'm weary of the pansy's poses,
And roses! *Everyone* has *roses!*

(*The flowers go out, humiliated, as* MISTRESS MARY *continues.*)

Please suggest some flower new.

FIRST GARDENER. Would columbine or zinnias do?
(*She shakes her head.*)
SECOND GARDENER. Marigolds for you to pluck?
(*She shakes her head.*)
THIRD GARDENER. Or crimson hollyhocks for luck?
FOURTH GARDENER. Or poppies' oriental splendor?
FIRST GARDENER. Or yellow lilies tall and slender?
(*She still shakes her head.*)

MISTRESS MARY.

No. Let me think.—Oh! 'Twould be witty
To grow a row of maidens pretty!

(*The* GARDENERS *are astonished.*)

FIRST GARDENER.

But maidens we could never grow
In a formal garden row!

(MISTRESS MARY *pays not the least attention to this.*)

MISTRESS MARY.

And think how clever, quaint and neat
To have some silver bells so sweet!

SECOND GARDENER.

Silver bells! There's no such thing!
Now blue bells might—?

MISTRESS MARY. (*Scornfully.*) Blue bells don't ring!
THIRD GARDENER. (*Hopefully.*) But, Mistress, *golden* bells can twinkle!

MISTRESS MARY. (*Stamping her foot.*)

Silence! I want bells that *tinkle!*
And along the garden border
Cockle shells in proper order!

ALL THE GARDENERS. Cockle shells!

MISTRESS MARY.

Yes. Now please hurry—
'Twill be so fine! I'm all a-flurry!

FIRST GARDENER.

Though years I've worked with spade and hoe
I never knew such things could grow.

SECOND GARDENER.

Your pardon, but it's my contention
One cannot plant the things you mention.

MISTRESS MARY.

What! No maids or silver bells?
You say I can't have cockle shells?

FOURTH GARDENER.

Good Mistress Mary, the fault is ours—
We've never heard of those three flowers.

(*The* GARDENERS, *bowing low, shake their heads sadly.*)

MISTRESS MARY.

Ho! Axemen! (*The* AXEMEN *enter.*)
Bind these stupid men!
Perhaps they will obey me then.

(*The* AXEMEN *advance and bind the frightened* GARDENERS *together. As they work they sing.*

AXEMEN'S SONG

(Tune: *Farmer in the Dell*)

Although you stand aghast
We'll quickly bind you fast,
For it is plain to us
Your better days are past!

We are the axemen bland
Whom you cannot withstand,
Though we're unpopular
We're always in demand!

We bear the axe so dread
And many a life we've sped—
We use arithmetic
And just subtract the head!

(*When the* AXEMEN *finish they stand at either side of the* GARDENERS.)

MISTRESS MARY.

Now I'll leave you until morning
With this last dire warning—
If then my garden is not growing
With maids and shells and bells a-blowing
In their gay and cozy beds—
I will have your silly heads.

GARDENERS. Have mercy on us, Mistress Mary!

MISTRESS MARY. I won't—I am just that contrary!
(*She goes out primly.*)

FIRST GARDENER. (*To* AXEMEN.) I hope, good sirs, that you'll not harm us!

SECOND GARDENER. Those axes sharp and bright alarm us!

FIRST AXEMAN. (*Politely.*)

We seldom look for loot or booty,
We're simple men who do our duty.

SECOND. AXEMAN.

It is our task your heads to sever,
But to annoy you—never, *never!*

FIRST AXEMAN. (*To second.*)

Suppose we settle for the night
You here, I there.

(*He points to either side of stage.*)

SECOND AXEMAN.

We'll slumber light,
And when the shades no longer lurk
We'll rise and do our bloody work.

(*The* AXEMEN *settle themselves at either side of the stage. Their heads nod and soon they are asleep.*)

FIRST GARDENER. Oh, what a plight we four are in!

SECOND GARDENER. Who'll bear the sad word to our kin?

THIRD GARDENER.

Four honest simple men are we
Who did our tasks right loyally.
It is not just that we should bend
And come to this untimely end.

FOURTH GARDENER.

I've heard folks say, and swear 'tis true,
That there's a guardian fairy who
Keeps good gardeners from all ill.

FIRST GARDENER. Would such a one were living still!

SECOND GARDENER.

Oh, woe is me! 'Twill soon be dawn
And then, methinks, all hope is gone.

THIRD GARDENER.

How sad for us that Mistress Mary
Is always of a mind contrary!

(*They all heave great sighs and look even more discour-*

aged. They bow their heads so that they do not see the FAIRY *when she enters. The* AXEMEN *are still asleep.*)

FAIRY.

Well! Four good gardeners tied together,
All exposed to the wind and weather!

FIRST GARDENER. Good dame, for mercy's sake forbear—
(*He looks up and sees the* FAIRY.)
Brothers! What do you see there?
(*The* GARDENERS *all start in surprise.*)
SECOND GARDENER. A vision beautiful and airy!
THIRD GARDENER. By my hoe! It is a fairy!
GARDENERS. (*Hands clasped.*) Sweet lady, save us from the axe!

FAIRY. (*Severely*)
But maybe you've been growing lax
And left the path all choked with weeds,
And waited late to sew your seeds,
And seldom took the spade by handle—
Such things can make a garden scandal!

FOURTH GARDENER.
Oh, 'tis not so! As you're a fairy,
We're faithful to our Mistress Mary.

FIRST GARDENER.
But she's commanded us to grow
Cockle shells all in a row!

SECOND GARDENER. And *silver bells* that really jingle!
THIRD GARDENER. And maidens, pretty, sweet and single!

FOURTH GARDENER.
As this is quite beyond our art
They soon will slice us, head from heart!

THIRD GARDENER.

Oh, if it is within your power,
Pray, teach us how to grow those flowers!

FAIRY. (*Laughing*)

Why, cockle shells are very simple.
For maidens you must plant a dimple.
And silver bells grow quite enchanting
If you but whistle tunes while planting.

SECOND GARDENER. Alas, if we had only known it!

FIRST GARDENER. Our doom—there's no way to postpone it!

FOURTH GARDENER.

At sunrise, with those axes dreaded,
We gardeners four will be beheaded!

FAIRY. So soon? Then I must work a spell.

(*The* GARDENERS *are excited.*)

FIRST GARDENER. Good fairy, we'll repay you well!

SECOND GARDENER. We'll be your faithful slaves forever!

THIRD GARDENER. We're honest men.

FOURTH GARDENER. If not so clever.

FAIRY.

Peace! Hold your tongues and close your eyes
While some magic I devise.

(*The* GARDENERS *close their eyes.*)

FAIRY. (*Waving her wand.*)

In your rainbow dresses
And your finest gear,
Ribbons in your tresses,
Maidens—appear!

(*The* MAIDENS *run in quickly and silently from either side and stand in a row at back.*)

Dainty, pert and saucy
Gay and frolicsome,
Silver bells glossy
Hither quickly come!

(*The* SILVER BELLS *take their places in front of* MAIDENS. *If they are the same height as* MAIDENS *they must kneel.*)

Hasten, hasten, cockle shells!
To the garden bring your graces.
As my magic now impels—
Cockles, come and take your places!

(*The* COCKLE SHELLS *enter and sit in front of the* SILVER BELLS *so that they are lower and the garden appears in three tiers. This has been done very quietly.*)

FAIRY. (*Untying the* GARDENERS.)
Now you're saved from death so hateful—
Look about you and be grateful!

(*The freed* GARDENERS *turn and see the garden.*)
FIRST GARDENER. (*Rubbing his eyes.*) Can it be my eyes deceive me!

SECOND GARDENER. (*To third.*)
Brother, quick, I pray, relieve me—
Is that just a madman's dream?

THIRD GARDENER.
'Tis a garden strange, I deem,
Grown for us by this good fairy.

FOURTH GARDENER.
And it's just as Mistress Mary
Wished to have her garden made—
Shell and bell and pretty maid!

ALL GARDENERS. (*To* FAIRY.) Thanks! And thanks! And thanks again!

FAIRY. (*Graciously.*)

Not at all, my worthy men!
Now to work to tend and nourish,
So your garden's sure to flourish.
But I must no longer tarry—
Farewell, Gardeners!

GARDENERS. Farewell, FAIRY!

(*The* FAIRY *disappears. The* GARDENERS *begin to hoe, singing their song gaily. The* AXEMEN *presently rub their eyes, stretch, get up and view the garden in amazement.*)

FIRST AXEMAN. The garden's grown!

SECOND AXEMAN. We are defeated!

(*The* GARDENERS *go on working and speak casually to the* AXEMEN.)

FIRST GARDENER. Your hungry axes we have cheated!

FIRST AXEMAN. But how?

SECOND AXEMAN. And when?

FIRST AXEMAN. What magic deep?

SECOND GARDENER. 'Tis pity, sirs, you fell asleep.

THIRD GARDENER.

Aye, 'tis a pretty sight
To see a garden grow at night.

(*The* GARDENERS *go on working humming their song. The* AXEMEN *look at each other in amazement. Then* MISTRESS MARY *enters. The* GARDENERS *bow and stand proudly at attention, hoes at their sides. The* AXEMEN *bow and retire to one side.* MISTRESS MARY *raises her hands in astonishment and walks up and down before the garden as she speaks.*)

MISTRESS MARY.

Oh, lovely, lovely, lovely sight!
I'm all a-flutter with delight!

(*She stops and examines each flower as she mentions it.*)

Maidens so aristocratic!

(*The* MAIDENS *curtsy.*)

Bells with perfume aromatic!

(*The* BELLS *tinkle. She claps her hands.*)

Oh, delightful silver bells!
And really, truly—cockle shells!

(*She turns to the* GARDENERS *with dignity.*)

Gardeners, from all guilt you're shriven,
I may say you're quite forgiven.

(*The* GARDENERS *bow humbly.*)

Think what envy I'll create!

(*To her great satisfaction she sees some* NEIGHBORS *approaching.*)

Look—there are neighbors at my gate!

(*Several* YOUNG LADIES *enter singing.*)

YOUNG LADIES' SONG

(Tune: *Oats and Beans*)

Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
Tell us how your garden grows!

MISTRESS MARY.

With silver bells and cockle shells,
With silver bells and cockle shells,
With silver bells and cockle shells,
And pretty maidens all in rows!

(*At the conclusion of the song all repeat it and the* MAIDENS *and* MISTRESS MARY *dance with the* AXEMEN *and the* GARDENERS *while the flowers nod their heads to the music and the bells jingle. If desired, the flowers which appeared in the earlier dance may come on and dance again but it may be preferable to have the* ROSES, DAISIES, PANSIES, *and* PINKS *take the parts of the* SILVER BELLS, COCKLE SHELLS, *and* MAIDENS. *At the end of the dance the people dance off, followed by the flowers who take partners and dance off.*)

MUSIC

The tunes for all songs can be found in "Twice 55 Games with Music: The Red Book," which may be obtained from the National Recreation Association, 315 Fourth Avenue, New York City, for twenty-five cents.

COSTUMES

GARDENERS—*The* GARDENERS *wear overalls and, if desired, they may have wide straw hats.*

MISTRESS MARY—*The dress is high waisted and the skirt long and full with a sash. Colored cheesecloth may be used. Elaborate costuming is not necessary but, if wanted, Kate Greenaway costumes would be very effective for* MISTRESS MARY, *the* MAIDS *and the* NEIGHBORS. *Simple costumes can be made quite striking, however, with little expense or trouble.* MISTRESS MARY *might carry a little silk bag hanging from her wrist, and a fan.*

ROSES—*All the flowers wear plain green cheesecloth slips with crêpe paper arranged about the neck to indicate the flower. The* ROSES *have large pink petals which stand out around their faces.*

PANSIES—*The* PANSIES *have five large purple petals arranged like the flowers.*

PINKS—*Finely shredded crêpe paper in shades of rose worn about the shoulders as a cape.*

DAISIES—*A daisy chain may be worn or, if blond children are used, a hat of petals.*

AXEMEN—*The distinguishing feature of the* AXEMAN *is his axe. This is a large broad axe cut from pasteboard and painted silver with red handle. Radiator paint will give the silver effect. The costume itself is plain black. Just an ordinary black suit is all that is necessary. Black helmets of paper cambric may be added.*

MAIDS—*The* MAIDS *may wear plain white or green cheesecloth slips with different colored capes cut from crêpe paper. If desired they may wear hats to match. Plain colors should be used for the maids and figured materials, if desired, for* MISTRESS MARY *and the* NEIGHBORS.

SILVER BELLS—*Pointed silver caps with many little bells sewn on them. White argentine has a silvery glaze that gives a good effect. The rest of the costume is a silver-gray slip made of cheesecloth splashed with radiator paint. Plenty of bells should be sewn on the costume.*

COCKLE SHELLS—*The* COCKLE SHELLS *wear a plain green slip and for the shell effect have a wide bib of white paper fluted and scalloped to resemble a scallop shell. It should reach to the waist.*

NEIGHBORS—*The neighbor maids are dressed like* MISTRESS MARY *and may wear bonnets and carry parasols if desired.*

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN [1]

A children's play in two scenes. Published by the League of Red Cross Societies.

[1] Included by courtesy of The American Junior Red Cross. National Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

CHARACTERS

THE BAT; THE LADY OF THE MOON; FRESH AIR.

THE CHILDREN (*each child's costume indicates the country or the food he represents*).

MARY, *United States;* JACK, *Great Britain*; THOMAS, *Liberia;* YVONNE, *France;* WILHELM, *Germany;* BORISKA, *Hungary;* FRANTIK, *Czecho-Slovakia;* ELSA, *Austria;* PER, *Sweden;* ILENA, *Rumania;* JAN, *Poland;* LIAN-YIN, *China;* YAMANTO, *Japan;* ALEKSA, *Jugo-Slavia;* STEPHANOVITCH, *Russia;* JOSE, *Spain;* GINO, *Italy.*

Characters continued:

MILK, SUGAR, COCOA, APPLE, RICE, COAL.

NOTE: *The first scene may be used as a complete play. If so, the second one may be either used or dropped, and if used, it may be made over into another play.*

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

SCENE ONE: *A dimly lighted room with a big French window at the center back. Boys and girls of different nations are dozing in their chairs, others are asleep on cushions on the floor. A large black* BAT *carrying a long stick is in the center. The* BAT *tickles and pokes at* THE CHILDREN. *He sings and laughs. The scene takes place in the night.*

MARY. Leave me alone, you black thing.

GINO. I want to sleep.

ELSA. Go away, will you?

THE BAT. You cannot get rid of me so easily, ha, ha! I live here. No one has ever been able to get rid of me.

(*He dances and tickles them with his stick.*)

ALEKSA. It hurts.

STEPHANOVITCH. Please don't torture us!

THE BAT. I do as I please. You will soon learn to like me. You cannot get away from me anyhow, so we may as well be friends.

(*He dances and takes something out of his pocket and throws it to* THE CHILDREN.)

ALL OF THEM. (*Almost, but not quite at the same time.*) What is that? Awful stuff! Stop doing that! I say! (*They all sit up.*)

THE BAT. Ha, ha! Those are my infinitesimal invisible friends, the germs—I spread them around free of charge.

(*He dances and sings and throws some more germs over* THE CHILDREN.)

A VOICE. Let in the fresh air!

THE BAT. Don't do that or I'll tickle you hard!

THE VOICE. Let in the fresh air!

THE BAT. They don't listen to you, they don't get up. (*He laughs.*)

MARY. Suppose we open the window!

ILENA. Do let's open the window!

LIAN-YIN. Will you open it then?

GINO. Why don't you get up yourself?

YAMANTO. That's right! (*Turing to* LIAN-YIN.) Why don't you?

FRANTIK. Don't quibble. I will open the window. (*He opens the window and in comes* FRESH AIR *dressed in white.*)

JOSE. It's cold! Let's close the window.

FRESH AIR. Oh! no. That will stifle me. You don't want that, do you?

THE BAT. Children, turn him out. Remember I can keep you warm.

THE VOICE. Listen to me, children: drive the Bat away.

MARY. Do drive him away, Jack, he is so ugly.

JACK. Wilhelm is older.

WILHELM. Why shuffle it on me?

THE BAT. Ha, ha! You cannot get rid of me. And if I stay with you long enough you won't even try to!

THE VOICE. Drive him away! Drive him away, I say.

JOSE. Who are you, voice from afar?

THE VOICE. I am the Lady of the Moon. I watch over you, I protect you. I wait for you to learn your lessons.

YVONNE. How beautiful her voice is! Let us go into the garden and see her.

THE VOICE. That is not allowed, dear children. You must stay in this house until your lesson is learned.

MARY. I want so much to go in the garden.

THE VOICE. Not yet, Mary. You are not ready for the garden.

PER. Then do come inside and let us see you.

THE VOICE. Drive the Bat away and I will come.

STEPHANOVITCH. But my dear lady, we can't!

MARY. Jack, we two will try.

THE BAT. Come, see if you dare.

(MARY *and* JACK *hesitate.* THE BAT *is about to attack them. They scream.*)

MARY. (*Running to the corner.*) Come and help us!

(FRESH AIR *dances in the middle of the room between* MARY *and* THE BAT. THE BAT *shrinks back and goes out slowly.* FRESH AIR *still dancing encircles the children a number of times and stops when* THOMAS *speaks.*)

THOMAS. It's cold!

YVONNE. I should say it is! Terribly cold!

LIAN-YIN. Maybe we should not have let the Bat go. It was warm just a minute ago, wasn't it?

THOMAS. I tell you what: we can close the window again.

FRESH AIR. What about me? Please don't!

BORISKA. Does that hurt you, Fresh Air?

FRESH AIR. Of course.

BORISKA. We don't want to harm him, do we?

FRANTIK. No!

PER. But I'm cold!

MARY. I am not.

JOSE. I am.

YVONNE. So am I.

JACK. Then build a fire.

LIAN-YIN. Will someone close the window? I want to sleep!

JACK. Sleep with the window closed? Oh, I say!

YAMANTO. You are eternally sleepy!

LIAN-YIN. Is that any business of yours?

JOSE. Stop quarreling or I will shatter your brains. Jack, you close the window.

JACK. Stop ordering me about, or something will happen.

JOSE. Is that so? I'd like to see what will happen. (*Getting up.*)

JACK. You would, eh? (JACK *rushes forward to* JOSE. YVONNE *is about to attack* MARY, *who intends to help* JACK. LIAN-YIN *and* YAMANTO *are ready to punch each other's noses.*)

(*The wind starts to blow outside, rain pours down in torrents; lightning is followed by thunder.* THE BAT *enters.*)

MARY. That creature is back again! (*Some start to cry of fright.*)

YVONNE. How terribly ugly he is! Uh, I hate him!

THE VOICE. Stop fighting among yourselves and drive the Bat away.

JACK. But we drove him away and here he is back again! What's the use?

THE VOICE. Drive him so far away that he can never come back.

STEPHANOVITCH. We can't. He is stronger than any of us.

THE VOICE. Is he stronger than all of you?

MARY AND OTHERS. (*Looking at each other and repeating.*) All of us; All of us!

YVONNE. What does that mean? All of us? Will you tell us kind Lady of the Moon?

THE VOICE. Think! All together, could you drive away the Black Bat?

MARY. Ah! I know. Let's try! Come on, all together. Let's attack him all at once!

BORISKA. That's right. (*Joins* MARY.)

JAN. Bravo! Come on!

ALEKSA, GINO. All at once!

FRESH AIR. Splendid! All together. You cannot fail. I am on your side, children.

ALL THE CHILDREN. Good, Fresh Air, help us, do! (JOSE,

STEPHANOVITCH *and all the others join in a rough-and-tumble fight.* MARY *is knocked down,* FRESH AIR *rushes to her aid, fans her with his cap and she recovers. As each child begins to weaken or feel suffocated with the stuff* THE BAT *throws at them,* FRESH AIR *flies to his aid and revives him. After a severe contact* THE CHILDREN *roll over* THE BAT, *break his long stick and drive him out of the window. The storm subsides and the moon shines through the window. The* LADY OF THE MOON *enters.*)

LADY OF THE MOON. Children! Children! What have you done? (THE CHILDREN *cannot answer.*) Fresh Air, what has happened?

FRESH AIR. The Bat has been driven away.

LADY OF THE MOON. The Bat driven away! Who did it?

FRESH AIR. The children.

LADY OF THE MOON. Good work! The Bat has always tormented the people of this house. I have seen grown men fight him and fail to expel him. Tell me, how was it done?

CHILDREN. All together!

LADY OF THE MOON. Ah, that's the way! The only way! Oh, children, children! How proud I am of you! You've learned your lesson at last. For hundreds of years I've peeped in at that window to see if the people of this house had learned those two little magic words. Repeat your lesson, my dears; the words are so beautiful in my ears. What is the way to drive the Bat away?

CHILDREN. All together!

LADY OF THE MOON. They know it! They truly know it! Children, do you know the wonderful thing you've done?

BORISKA. What, what? Please tell us.

LADY OF THE MOON. You've earned the right to come out of this house into my garden.

YAMANTO. Into the garden! Oh!

JACK. Isn't that ripping, I say!

YVONNE. Can Fresh Air come too?

ELSA. Of course, silly, it's his home!

CHILDREN. (*Tumbling pell-mell out of the window.*) The Garden! (*As they pour into the garden laughter comes back and exclamations of delight.*) How beautiful! Oh, look at the dew!

SCENE TWO: *It is a bright moonlight night in the garden. The Commodities*—MILK, SUGAR, COCOA, APPLE, RICE *and* COAL—*are talking among themselves in small groups. They are dressed to suggest their roles.* THE CHILDREN *come running into the garden. The* LADY OF THE MOON *stands at the left of the stage.*)

CHILDREN. Oh, what a beautiful garden, how lovely and fresh it is!

(*They sing in a round some gay tune. Then they lie down on the grass.*)

FRANTIK. I'm rather hungry.

ILENA. So am I, and thirsty too.

ALL THE REST. I wish we had something to eat and drink.

(*The* COMMODITIES *suddenly step forward; each presents himself to* THE CHILDREN *by speaking his verse and then retires to the back of the stage.*)

MILK. I am Milk, so pure and white.

SUGAR. My name is Sugar, sweet and light.

COCOA. Of Cocoa you have surely heard.

APPLE. Of Apple I'll say but one word.

RICE. With Rice you like your plates heaped higher.

COAL. Here's Coal to make a cosy fire. (*Turns to other* COMMODITIES.) Shall we feed these children?

(COAL *has a dirty face and a bluff, hearty way about him, like a miner.*)

ALL THE COMMODITIES. Quick, let's make a fire.

(COAL, *using a chisel, takes some small pieces of himself from inside his blouse and makes a fire.*)

MILK. (*Runs into the house and comes out with a saucepan.*) Let's make something good. I'm willing to give myself for them.

COCOA, SUGAR, APPLE. And I, and I, and I. . . .

MILK. Come along, Cocoa. What are you good for?

COCOA. I'm to put fat on to bones and warmth into bodies. Take me—take me.

(*He pours spoonfuls of cocoa from a tin he wears, into the saucepan.*)

SUGAR. I also am good nourishment; use me. . . .

MILK. Certainly, my friend, but not too much of you. . . .

SUGAR. I didn't say too much, Milk. For I know very well that you are more useful than any of us. You build bone and teeth and muscle. I can't.

MILK. (*Accepting* SUGAR'S *gift to her saucepan.*) There, there, good Sugar, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. You are a fine generous fellow. How much of myself should I give?

SUGAR. Oh, as much as you can spare, good Milk—a cupful for every child at least.

(MILK *contributes to the saucepan.*)

RICE. It doesn't seem to be my turn to give myself, but let me at least stir the pot.

SUGAR. I don't see why you should.

MILK. I do. He wants to help. It's only natural. (*To* RICE.) Thank you.

(RICE *takes charge of the cooking.*)

APPLE. I have a gift for all of you. (*Passes apples to* THE CHILDREN.) I put roses in the cheeks. Yvonne, you like me, don't you?

ALL THE CHILDREN. We all like you, good Apple!

APPLE. Then eat me every day—that makes me very gay.

CHILDREN. We'll try—when you're in season. Mr. Apple.

RICE. Ready now! Milk, you pour out. You, as the greatest contributor, should have that honor.

MILK. Thank you, Mr. Rice.

(*She serves* THE CHILDREN *with* COCOA. *They drink.*)

BORISKA. (*Goes up to* SUGAR.) Come home with me, will you please, Sugar?

WILHELM. No, with me!

ALL THE CHILDREN. With me . . . with me!

SUGAR. But how can I go with all of you at once, and forever?

THOMAS. Rice, you come with me.

ILENA. Oh, please don't, Rice. Stay with me, I want you.

ALL THE CHILDREN. So do I . . . so do I.

MARY. What a dreadful mess! We each of us can't have all of you. Still, we feel we want you.

ALEKSA. I know . . . Lady of the Moon . . . tell us what to do.

LADY OF THE MOON. You have already discovered one thing by yourselves. Try to decide this question too.

YVONNE. I think it's polite to consult them, because after all, you know, they mightn't want to go with anybody at all.

(*The* COMMODITIES *have been talking in a group earnestly to each other during the recent speeches.*)

CHILDREN. That's right. We're very sorry. Let's ask them.

STEPHANOVITCH. (*Goes up to group.*) We all want you to come home with us to our own countries. What do you want to do? How may we all have you at the same time?

(COAL *steps out from the group, scratches his head thoughtfully.*)

COAL. We've been talking about this very thing and our conclusion is, first of all (*aside*) I hope they won't mind our being so frank (*turning to* CHILDREN), that you're all confused. You don't seem to see things in a common-sense way.

(*He turns to the group, who shout encouragingly.*)

COMMODITIES. Bravo, that's right.

LIAN-YIN. What do you mean—common sense?

COAL. Well, in this case I mean trying to see what the facts are instead of thinking only about what you feel. Because if each of you saw that all the others are just as much in need of us as himself, he wouldn't insist on claiming any one of my friends for himself alone.

JACK. That's quite true, Coal. We don't pay enough attention to the feelings and needs of other people.

JOSE. But all people don't deserve to have nice things.

MARY. No, no. I don't agree with you, because even if we don't like people it doesn't follow that they're not hungry and thirsty.

PER. Besides I don't know who is nice and who isn't. When I first saw all of you (*turning to* CHILDREN) I didn't like you, because you look different. But I do now.

GINO. Yes, that's exactly what happened to me.

ALL THE CHILDREN. And to me . . . and to me. . . .

COAL. Of course! Are you only now finding out that people are much the same even though their clothes seem strange? If it weren't for us, every one of you would starve. That is one way in which you are exactly alike.

ALL THE CHILDREN. Oh, don't go away! Stay here with us!

YVONNE. Let's agree to live together happily here; never to ask for more than our share, and be sure that everyone has enough.

COAL. Yes, and to remember that rough fellows like me

are usually better than we look. Come, friends, we have our work to do.

(*The* COMMODITIES *hurry off stage.*)

LADY OF THE MOON. And now, children, we may sleep; for to-day we have learned many lessons: Who can repeat them?

ALL THE CHILDREN. We all can.

FRANTIK. Let's, and all together!

ALL THE CHILDREN. We've learned today,

That Love and Trust are better far
Than base Distrust and Ugly War;
That Work and Play together bring
The Power to conquer anything.

CURTAIN

THE ZEBRA DUN [1]

By

IRIS VINTON

[1] Included by courtesy of the author. For permission to produce this play apply to Miss Iris Vinton, 51 Horatio Street, New York City.

THE PEOPLE IN THE PLAY

STANWICK, DEE, RALPH JARNDYCE — *three boys spending their vacations at the* dude ranch *of* PAT MCBRIDE, *the Z Bar Ranch.*

RUSTY, SANDY — *two of the cowboys.*

FIRST INDIAN

SECOND INDIAN

THIRD INDIAN

We hear the voices of PAT MCBRIDE *and of* ROLAND PETERSON.

Indians, Cowboys, and others.

THE ZEBRA DUN

SCENE: *The Z Bar Ranch, the "dude ranch" of* PAT MCBRIDE, *somewhere in the Southwest. A rail fence runs along the back of the stage. On one post is nailed a sign that reads, "To the Corral." The arrow on the sign points to the left. There is a large rock in the center near the fence.*

TIME: *The present.*

STANWICK *sits on the top rail strumming a guitar.* DEE *sits on the rock, his chin propped on the palm of one hand, a far-away look in his eyes.*

STANWICK. (*Singing the chorus of "The Chisholm Trail."* [1]) Coma ti youpy yi ya, whoopee! Coma ti youpy yi ya, whoopee! Coma ti youpy yi ya, whoopee! Coma ti youpy yi ya, whoopee!

DEE. (*Looking up at* STANWICK.) Gosh, Stan, haven't you practised that enough? You've been at it ever since we got up this morning.

STANWICK. Well, there isn't anything else to do, is there? Besides you don't have to sit there.

DEE. I do, too. I'm waiting for Rusty.

STANWICK. Are you going *riding* again this morning?

DEE. Sure. What did you think I came out to this ranch for?

STANWICK. But a fellow gets tired of getting up every morning just to go riding. I'm sick of horses and cows.

DEE. Yes, and last summer when we went to camp you were sick of hiking, you were sick of swimming, you didn't like the eats.

[1] "The Chisholm Trail" and other cowboy songs will be found in Miss Margaret Larkin's book, "Singing Cowboy," with music by Helen Black. Published by A. Knopf, N. Y. C., 1931.

STANWICK. Well, you didn't like it yourself, only you wouldn't admit it.

DEE. That's not so. I had a grand time at that last camp.

STANWICK. Well, I guess I did, too.

(*Whistling is heard off right.* DEE *and* STANWICK *look to see who is coming.*)

STANWICK. Here comes Ralph.

RALPH. (*All dressed up in a cowboy's outfit, with very bright colored* chaps. Chaps *are cowboy leggings. He comes in as nonchalantly as possible and struts up and down before the boys, who watch him silently, and a bit enviously.*) Well, how do you like 'em? (*Displays the* chaps *to the best advantage.*) Some style to them, isn't there? Remember that fellow from Montana who rode that wild horse last week in the *rodeo?*

STANWICK. Unhuh. (*Twangs his guitar impatiently.*)

RALPH. Well, these are exact copies. (*Walks across the stage.*) Exact copies. Notice the spurs, too. They're only silver plated though. Dad wouldn't fork up enough cash for the real silver ones.

STANWICK. Oh, for the love of Michael, go away. I got to practise.

RALPH. I heard you practising. And, you haven't that yell down right at all. The cowboys don't yell like that. Listen: Coma youpy yi ya, whee ray! Coma youpy yi ya, whee ray! (*Throws his hat up in imiation of a cowboy.*)

DEE. Between the two of you yelling around this might just as well be a *coyote* den.

(RALPH *climbs upon the fence beside* STANWICK. *The three boys sit there gloomily for a moment.*)

RALPH. Say, Stanwick, you know this ranch business is all the bunk. It's been duller than dishwater for a week. I almost wish I was home in New York.

STANWICK. So do I. I'll never spend my vacation on a ranch again. It's all Dee's fault, too.

DEE. (*Bridling.*) My fault? Say didn't you almost run my father crazy until he persuaded your parents to let you come out here?

RALPH. It was your idea, though, Dee.

DEE. Supposing it was! I imagine you'd rather be at camp this summer. Up at a lake in Maine maybe, where the water is nice and cold, and you can get up at daylight and jump right in. Brrrrrrrr. . . . I can feel that icy water now. (*Shivers.*)

RALPH. No, Dee, to tell you the truth, I'm not so crazy about camps. You never do anything but swim.

STANWICK. I'll say you don't. Remember last summer? We stayed in the water so much, I'm surprised we didn't develop fins.

RALPH. Oh, it just seems after you've been somewhere on your vaction for a while, things begin to get monotonous. We've sat around here now for a week doing absolutely nothing. And now, I've just got a pair of real *chaps* and not an earthly thing to wear them to.

DEE. You can't have a *rodeo* every day. Didn't we just have one last week? And you almost broke your neck trying to throw a calf.

RALPH. Bulldog a yearling, you mean.

STANWICK. Ah, go on, it couldn't have been more'n three months old.

RALPH. Stanwick, that's not so. Sandy himself told me it was a yearling. I guess he knows what he's talking about. Been a cowboy all his life.

STANWICK. Well, have it your own way. Except I know it couldn't have been more'n *six* months old anyway.

(*They are interrupted by someone calling.*)

HIGH PITCHED VOICE FROM OUT LEFT. Yahoo, Dee! Yahoo, Dee!

DEE. Oh, for cripe's sake, it's *that pest* again! (*Calling.*) What do you want?

VOICE. Come and help me put the bridle on my horse. I got it all tangled up.

DEE. Can't you do it yourself for once?

VOICE. (*In a wail.*) You know I can't. Come on, Dee.

DEE. Oh, I suppose I'll have to. You'll pester me to death if I don't. (*He gets up.*) See you later.

STANWICK. Not horseback riding, if that's what you mean.

(DEE *goes out.* STANWICK *and* RALPH *lapse into a gloom.*)

STANWICK. (*After a moment.*) Ralph, I guess you're right about this ranch business. It certainly gets awfully dull as a place for a vacation after living in New York. It gets *awfully* dull.

RALPH. Of course, you've always got your guitar. But I'm not musical. If I could just think of somewhere to go to wear these *chaps.*

STANWICK. (*Not interested.*) Ho, hum.

(RALPH *glances out left. He jumps off the fence excitedly.*)

RALPH. Come on, wake up, here comes Rusty. (*Shouts loudly.*) Hay there, Rusty!

(RUSTY *comes in—a red-headed, rather bowlegged cowboy.*)

RUSTY. You boys look gloomier than a chuck wagon cook. Where's Dee?

STANWICK. Oh, he went to help that pest, Roland Peterson, put the bridle on his horse.

RUSTY. In that case, I'll jest wait right here for Dee. Wall, boys, cheer up. No use going around like a couple of rain clouds getting ready for a thunder storm.

STANWICK. It's all right for you to talk about being cheerful. But, gee whiz, Rusty, things are getting terribly dull around here.

RUSTY. Dull? Wall, I swan now, and didn't we jest give you a bang-up *rodeo* less'n a week ago?

RALPH. You bet! It was some show all right. But, gosh, we haven't done a thing since, except maybe round up the milk cows twice a day.

STANWICK. And that gets monotonous after a while, you know.

RUSTY. Hum. . . .

STANWICK. The other boys said they wished you'd put on another show this week. They're getting rather fed up on this cow herding business, too.

RUSTY. Another *rodeo?* Jumpin' grasshoppers, you'd think to hear you talk, that gettin' up a *rodeo* was like orderin' your breakfast.

STANWICK. Well, gosh, Rusty, you don't expect us to spend our vacation just stagnating.

RALPH. Yes, it's an awful disappointment to us to find all our ideas about western adventure just simply fall through flat, like this.

RUSTY. You wouldn't like to go to a Mexican *baile* tonight, would you?

STANWICK. Ba-i-le?

RALPH. Don't be so stupid, Stanwick. He means dance.

STANWICK. Naw. We don't want to go where there's going to be a lot of girls. Gosh, I have enough of girls in the winter time. It isn't any joke having two sisters.

RUSTY. You boys are sure hard to please. But I'm going to tell you something. You better keep it low, because I sure wouldn't want to excite the rest of these boys. (RUSTY *becomes mysterious.*)

RALPH. Gosh, what is it, Rusty?

RUSTY. Aw, I better not tell you. You'd write home to your Paw and Maw about it and they'd send for you at once if they knew about it.

STANWICK. We wouldn't tell.

RALPH. We can pretty well manage our own affairs.

RUSTY. Sure you can keep this under your hats? I wouldn't want to let the boss know I told you this, he'd fire me quicker'n a gnat can blink his eye.

RALPH. Of course, we won't tell.

STANWICK. You can trust us.

RUSTY. Wall, to tell you the truth, then, we been laying pretty low here at the ranch for the past week. You've noticed I suppose that we've kept you all millin' around close to the house lately, ain't ya?

RALPH. Yes?

RUSTY. There's a purpose in that.

STANWICK. What you driving at, Rusty?

RUSTY. We're expectin' an attack most any day now.

STANWICK. An attack?

RALPH. What kind of an attack?

RUSTY. (*Dropping his voice.*) An Injun attack.

STANWICK. Now, Rusty, you're stringing us.

RALPH. Indians don't attack people these days.

RUSTY. That jest goes to show what you tenderfeet know about life on the ranch.

STANWICK. But Rusty, it doesn't stand to reason.

RUSTY. What don't stand to reason? Ain't thar nigh on to five thousand Apache Injuns on that thar resarvation jest beyond the draw in Smoky Hills?

STANWICK. Yes, of course. We visited the reservation the first week we were here.

RALPH. They were awfully friendly, too.

RUSTY. That jest goes to show what tenderfeet know

about Injuns. An Apache Injun is the closest mouthed human about his own business that was ever borned. And he is the oneriest human when he gits riled. Them Injuns has had it in for us ever since Mr. McBride sold old Chief Whitefoot that ole outlaw hoss, Zebra Dun.

RALPH. Gosh, the Chief must have been awfully dumb to buy an outlaw horse.

RUSTY. You don't know Zebra Dun. He's one beautiful animal, and he can sure act pretty when he wants to. And the Chief saw him one day in the corral when he was actin' pretty, and nothin' would do but he must buy Zebra Dun.

STANWICK. Then it was the Chief's own fault if he made a bad bargain.

RUSTY. Somehow the Chief don't see it that-a-way. And we jest got wind of some doin's up at the resarvation. Last year, Chief Whitefoot got hoppin' mad 'cause one of our cowhands branded a calf he claimed was his'n. And one day the Chief and some o' his Apaches swooped down and that thar cowhand ain't been heerd o' since.

RALPH. Honest?

STANWICK. Are you sure, Rusty?

RUSTY. I reckon you must o' read about it. It was in all the papers.

STANWICK. I think I did read something about a raid, or something down here.

RUSTY. Sure you did. Everybody was talkin' about it. And I'll sell my saddle if thar ain't plenty of excitement around here before long.

RALPH. They're not on the warpath, are they?

RUSTY. Wall, ya cain't tell. Mr. McBride is bein' mighty careful where he lets you boys go, that's all.

STANWICK. Is he going to try to get everybody back to town?

RUSTY. Lord, no! That's the very worst thing he could do. With all that lonely open road crawlin' 'round through them mountains—why, it'd jest be like goin' inta a trap.

STANWICK. Gosh. So that's why we've been lying low.

RUSTY. You bet. Now what you boys have got to do is keep your eyes pealed. Most likely they'll come through the draw. The thing to do is to keep a sharp lookout down thar by the south gate. I been doin' duty myself all mornin'.

STANWICK. Say, Rusty . . .

RUSTY. Sh. . . . Here comes Sandy. Not a word of this, mind.

STANWICK. Not a word.

RALPH. I should say not. (*Inspired.*) Golly, we can scout for Indians!

RUSTY. Sh. . . . (*He pulls out his goosequill toothpick and hops upon the fence. He sits there nonchalantly picking his teeth.* STANWICK *whangs away at his guitar.* RALPH *straightens his belt and begins to whistle.*)

(SANDY *comes in. He's long and rangy, slow of speech, utterly unexcitable. He enters snapping and whirling the rope in his hand.*)

SANDY. Mornin'.

RUSTY. Mornin'.

STANWICK AND RALPH. Hello.

(SANDY *stands whirling his rope.*)

RUSTY. Ridin' fence today?

SANDY. Yep.

RUSTY. Back kinda early, ain't ya?

SANDY. Unhuh.

RUSTY. (*Turning with a wink to the boys.*) Reckon you boys'll be expected down thar at the south gate? Won't you?

STANWICK. Naw. . . .

RALPH. For Pete's sake, Stanwick. (*To* RUSTY.) You bet.

We'll be getting along now. Come on, Stan. You better leave that guitar at the house.

STANWICK. (*Scrambling down off the fence hurriedly.*) Gosh, yes. We better be getting along.

(*The boys hurry out as fast as the dignity of* RALPH'S chaps *will allow.*)

SANDY. (*Looks after the boys in astonishment. Then climbs up beside* RUSTY.) Rusty, you know, I'm beginning to respect you. How did you manage to git rid of them two mosquitoes?

RUSTY. (*Bursting out laughing.*) They're goin' scoutin' fer Injuns.

SANDY. Wall, now I do saw. Scoutin' fer Injuns.

RUSTY. (*Still laughing.*) We've got 'em settled now for the rest of the week, I hope.

SANDY. (*Mournfully.*) Recollect, Rusty, there are ten more of them mosquitoes from the wilds of New York City, that something's simply got to be done about. They've buzzed around me for four days now, *suggestin'* excitin' things to do, or *askin'* fer excitin' things to do. I tell ya, Rusty, cow punchin' didn't use to have these hardships.

RUSTY. Lord no! Cow punchin' in the ole days was like layin' on a bed o'roses compared to keepin' up with the wild west idees of these here city dudes. Cain't think fer the life o' me what made ole man McBride go in fer this here darned dude ranchin' anyhow.

SANDY. He's says there's money in it.

RUSTY. Thar ain't no peace of mind though, actin' like a clown in a circus all the time. You look solemner'n an owl yourself.

SANDY. Yep. I feel like I'd been ridin' a trottin' hoss and was all jolted down.

RUSTY. Thought you'd got back awful early from that fence ridin' trick.

SANDY. Yep. We was doin' what you call this yere jumpin' fences and such.

RUSTY. Steeplechasing I thinks they calls it down Virginia way.

SANDY. Somethin' like that. Wall, I'm all wore out. The boys are now plannin' to go alligator huntin' in the *coulee*. Rusty, I had to let 'em go alone. I'm plumb tuckered out. Gosh, I knows when I'm licked.

RUSTY. Wall, I can think of only one thing to do.

SANDY. That's more'n I can do. Right now I'm at the end of my tether. Four times we've had cattle dippin'. Two times we dipped Ole Man Slocum's sheep. If we get 'em dipped agin in ten years, I reckon we'll have to go with a government warrant.

RUSTY. We've rounded up the cattle, 'til, Great Gee-hos-i-fat, if a steer sees a man on hoss back comin' he goes right fer the corral with a "what's the use" expression on his face that actually brings the tears to my eyes.

SANDY. You said you had an idee.

RUSTY. How about invitin' Ole Chief Whitefoot down to a regular pow-wow, and givin' them kids a surprise?

SANDY. Ya mean, gittin' Chief Whitefoot to come down from the resarvation with a mite more noise than usual?

RUSTY. That's the idea. Just have the Chief and his band o' Injuns pay us a nice ear-splittin' visit. Them two Injun scouts I jest sent along now are all prepared to spread the news of a raid, so we really ought to give 'em the chance.

SANDY. Rusty, I don't know whether we ought to turn them Injuns loose among these city chaps, 'cause Injuns is sorta delicut-like, but I'll take the chance if you will. (SANDY *gets down off the fence.*)

RUSTY. Whar ya goin', Sandy?

SANDY. I'm goin' to visit Ole Chief Whitefoot.

RUSTY. (*Getting down off the fence.*) If that Injun chief

on Ole Zebra Dun don't give them boys the show o' their lives, I'm sellin' my saddle and headin' north. (*They go out.*)

(*The lights are dimmed.*)

It's night. STANWICK *sits, leaning against a post. A lantern is beside him and he's fast asleep. He breathes heavily. From up at the ranch house comes the singing of cowboy songs and the twang of a guitar and the wheeze of harmonicas. This can be heard until the yelling and shouting later drowns it out.*

RALPH. (*Entering hurriedly and cautiously. He carries a lantern. He goes up to* STANWICK *and shakes him.*) For Pete's sake, wake up.

STANWICK. (*Sleepily.*) Go away. Go away.

RALPH. Wake up! (*Shakes him vigorously.*) Stan, Stan, wake up!

STANWICK. (*Warding him off.*) Leave me alone.

RALPH. You've got to get up, Stan. Good heavens! Here I left you to keep your eye on the horses so they wouldn't get away, and now you've gone to sleep. Wake up, Stan.

STANWICK. (*Rubbing his eyes, and stretching.*) What do you want? What do you want? Can't you leave me alone?

RALPH. Stan, you've got to listen. I tell you the Indians are coming.

STANWICK. (*Awakening suddenly.*) What? Where?

RALPH. The Indians are coming through the draw. I tell you I heard them hollering down there.

STANWICK. You did! What are we going to do?

RALPH. We've got to ride to the army post. That'll be lots better than riding to town as we planned. I've got it all figured out. Rusty and the others can hold them off until we get back with the Rangers.

STANWICK. (*Getting up quickly.*) Gosh, do you know the way to the post? It's miles from here.

RALPH. I know a cross cut. We'll have to ford the river, though.

STANWICK. I'll get the horses. They're all saddled. (STANWICK *runs off right.* RALPH *follows him.*)

(*They return in a moment.*)

RALPH. That's just like you, Stan. Go to sleep and let the horses get away.

STANWICK. But you were gone so long. Gosh, I got sleepy.

RALPH. Well, we can't argue now. We've simply got to find horses somewhere.

(*As though a long way off comes the yelling of Indians. The galloping of many horses' feet is heard.*) [1]

RALPH. There they come.

STANWICK. Now, what are we going to do?

RALPH. I tell you I've got to get a horse.

STANWICK. Won't Rusty and the others know what to do? Let's go tell Rusty and Sandy.

RALPH. You tell them. I'm going to get the Rangers. You can stand there if you want to and do nothing. I'm off.

(*He runs out right.*)

STANWICK. Wait a minute, Ralph. Wait! (*He runs out after* RALPH.)

(*The whooping of the* INDIANS *has grown louder and louder. It's right outside now. There is much loud talking in excited voices. The stamping of feet. Various boys' voices shouting, "Indians! It's Indians!" A man's deep voice calls, "Evenin', Chief Whitefoot." And the response, "Hi there, McBride!" And the man's voice, "Leave your paints* [2] *in the corral and come on in." There is a whoop*

[1] Some hollow cocoanut shells clapped smartly on a board in gallop rhythm will certainly make you think the Indians are coming all right.

[2] "Paints" are spotted horses. Indians liked them better than any other kind.

or two, the stamp of feet, the slam of a gate and several INDIANS *enter from the right with* RUSTY *and* SANDY. *They are all laughing heartily. The* INDIANS *are dressed in faded blue shirts and trousers and have their faces painted grotesquely.*)

FIRST INDIAN. Heap big pow-wow, eh, Rusty?

RUSTY. Boys, you turned the trick. Those boys' eyes nearly stuck out of their heads when you came whoopin' up the hill.

SECOND INDIAN. Big surprise for McBride?

SANDY. Naw, we told him, and he fell in with the idee. Said we shouldn't carry it too fer, though.

THIRD INDIAN. Got much *barbarcue?*

RUSTY. You bet. Right this way. (*Goes to left.*) Me and Sandy spent the day barbecuing.

(*As they start out,* STANWICK *comes running in, out of breath and very excited.*)

STANWICK. Rusty, Rusty, Ralph's gone!

RUSTY. Gone where?

STANWICK. Gone for the Rangers. We thought the Indians had come to raid us like you said.

SANDY. Which way did he go?

STANWICK. He took a short cut to the army camp. He said he knew a short way through the ford in the river.

RUSTY. Good Lord!

SANDY. What horse did he ride? Where did he get it?

STANWICK. I don't know what horse. He rushed into the corral just as the Indians came whooping in and took the first horse he could get. It was the one that belonged to the Chief, I think.

RUSTY. Good Lord!

SANDY. What color was it?

STANWICK. I couldn't see very well, but I think you call it *dun.*

FIRST INDIAN. Dun? Dun?

SECOND INDIAN. Big Chief's hoss, Zebra Dun.

RUSTY. My Lord! He's either ten feet down the road where Zebra Dun has bucked him off, or he's riding on a streak o' lightin' towards the draw and the resarvation.

THIRD INDIAN. Zebra Dun? Sure he go home. Fast like bullet out of gun.

RUSTY. I'll take the car and head him off.

SANDY. I'm with you, Rusty.

RUSTY. No, you stay here. I'll get him.

(DEE *comes rushing in from the left. Outside can be heard the sound of many laughing voices, and the beat of a horse's hooves. The men and boys are shouting: "Hi there, Ralph! Whee, look at him come! Jest like a streak o' lightin'. Keep your seat, cowboy!"*)

DEE. Come on, all of you. Come out to the corral. Ralph's riding Zebra Dun. Ooh, you oughta see. (*Points out left.*) See here he comes. (*All look out left.*) Atta boy, Ralph, don't let him buck you off! Go to it, cowboy! (DEE *jumps up and down.*)

RUSTY. I'll be horn-swoggled, if the darned little rascal ain't a ridin' him, Zebra Dun.

FIRST INDIAN. Whoopee! Heap big rider!

SANDY. Ridin' that bronc like a postage stamp on a letter.

(*The ker-bump, ker-bump of Zebra Dun's feet is heard. The sound of voices:* "Ride 'im, cowboy! Hooray! Don't let him buck you off, Ralph! You can hold him! Whoopee! See that boy ride that bronc!")

RALPH. (*Off stage, sings out high and very gaily.*) Coma ti youpy yi ya, whoopee! Coma ti youpy yi ya, whoopee!

MAN'S VOICE OFF STAGE. By golly, if he ain't tuckered that hoss plumb out.

(*The horse's hoof beats stop suddenly.*)

RALPH'S VOICE. Stand still, there, Zebra Dun. Good ole hoss.

(*An Indian or two yell. There is the sound of the confusion of voices congratulating* RALPH: "You rode him, cowboy. Hi, Ralph! Say you were great! I didn't know you could ride like that. Why don't you get a job in the movies? Oh, boy, some ridin'." *Those on the stage rush out shouting to* RALPH. *In a moment they return with* RALPH *seated on the shoulders of one of the cowboys and an Indian.*)

RALPH. (*When he sees* RUSTY.) Let me down. (*They do, and he goes up to* RUSTY. *The others fall back a bit, laughing and joking together.*) I sure rode him, didn't I, Rusty?

RUSTY. Boy, you sure did.

RALPH. And, let me tell you something, you ole red head, I'll get even with you about this fake raid if it takes me a lifetime.

RUSTY. You're even now, Boy. Darned if you ain't the beatinest rider I ever saw.

SANDY. You sure set that hoss pretty. But say, did you aim to come back here so soon when you started out?

(*The others laugh.*)

STANWICK. Gee, I just saw you go tearing down the road in a cloud of dust.

FIRST INDIAN. He take hoss. Get in saddle quick. Zebra Dun 'sprised, couldn't raise fuss.

RALPH. I guess that was it. Anyway, Zebra Dun took me about a hundred yards down the road.

DEE. Yea, we all saw you. Gee, you went past the front porch sixty per.

RALPH. He made a quick get-away all right. And when he got down the road apiece he whirled round and came right back and began buckin' around.

SECOND INDIAN. You stickum on, though.

RALPH. I made up my mind, he wasn't going to get away

from me. You all would be saying enough things about me believing all that stuff about the raid, without getting thrown from any darned ole hörse.

STANWICK. Gee, Ralph, it was swell!

DEE. Ralph, I didn't think you had it in you.

RALPH. Aw, it wasn't so much. I just held tight with my knees and let him go to it. It wasn't a bit worse than riding the scenic railway at Coney Island.

STANWICK. You got to wear those *chaps* someplace after all, didn't you?

RALPH. (*Shy.*) Yep, that's right.

VOICE OF MCBRIDE. (*From out left.*) Hey! Bring that boy back. The barbecue's ready and waitin' to be et.

RUSTY. (*Calling.*) We'll be right along.

VOICE OF MCBRIDE. Tell that boy, Ralph Jarndyce, Chief Whitefoot wants to initiate him into the tribe and make a real Indian out of him. He's got one of them strings o' blue beads for the only youngster in this yere part o' the country that can set ole Zebra Dun.

SANDY. Reckon, we better toddle along, boys.

THE OTHERS. Right with you, Sandy.

(*They go out left singing the following lines from the song, "Zebra Dun," that nearly every cowboy in the Southwest has sung sometime in his life:*

"The boss was standin' 'round watchin' the show
Walked up to the stranger and said he needn't go.
If you can use lasso like
You rode old Zebra Dun
You're the very man I been lookin' fer since the year o' one."

CURTAIN

THE GOLDEN FISH [1]

By

PERRY BOYER CORNEAU

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THE GOLDEN FISH

I.

SCENE: *The country near the the sea-shore. On the left part of a small cottage is seen. On the right are tall bushes. At back, behind a fence, are more bushes and trees, opening a little in the center to give a distant view of the blue sea. In front of the cottage is a bench on which stands a very old wash-tub. Clothes are hanging on a line stretched from the edge of the cottage to a tree across the stage.*

The MAN *is standing at the back, gazing out toward the distant sea. His* WIFE *is bending over the tub. On the right two* CHILDREN, *a* BOY *and a* GIRL, *are sitting on the ground making mud pies.*

WIFE

Rub-a-dub-dub—a-dub-dub-a-dub-dub!
Oh, I hate washing with a broken tub!

MAN

The sky is blue; the sun is shining bright;
The sea is calm; the world is all delight!

WIFE

Oh, yes, delight! I wish you had to rub
And wash the clothes in an old broken tub!

MAN

Watch the white gulls! I think they're trying to reach
The flaming sun. And see the glittering beach—

WIFE

Oh, yes, of course— You're a fine one to preach!
I have no time to do a thing but rub
And soak the washing in a broken tub.

CHILDREN (BOY *and* GIRL)

(*Jumping up from the ground and dancing back and forth, together, keeping step, as they recite in unison.*)
Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Mother's doing her washing with a broken tub!

WIFE

Rub-a-dub-dub—a-dub-dub-a-dub-dub!
Oh, I hate washing with a broken tub!

CHILDREN

(*Continuing to dance.*)
Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Mother's doing her washing with a broken tub!

MAN

Here, stop that now! Do not make so much noise.

BOY

We will—if you will buy us some nice toys.

MAN

Toys! What's the use of toys? You have the sea
To play with. Now why should you bother me
To buy you toys? The beach is strewn with shells.
They make fine toys. And in the forest dells
The wild flowers blossom—

WIFE

Rub-a-dub-a-dub!
You'd be wild too if you should use this tub.

CHILDREN

(*Dancing as before.*)
Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Mother's doing her washing with a broken tub!

GIRL

I want a doll.

MAN

With squirrels in the wood!
I'll catch one for you—tame it—

BOY

They're no good.

WIFE

Rub-a-dub-dub-a-dub-dub-a-dub-dub!
I'm tired of washing with this broken tub!
(*Angrily she throws down the tub. It falls apart.*)

CHILDREN

(*Dancing about gleefully.*)
Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Mother has smashed her washing tub!

MAN

Now what's the good of that? What will you do?

WIFE

You'll fix the tub. I'll leave it all to you
While I hang out the wash.

MAN

I think I'll go
Down to the shore. The landward breezes blow.
And there'll be fish blown inward from the sea.

WIFE

When will you fix the tub?

MAN

Leave that to me.

WIFE

See that you do. Well, as its nearly noon
The children, I suppose, will very soon
Be hungry. So be sure to catch some fish.
Our noon-day meal needs such a tasty dish.

(*The* MAN *gets his net and goes out.*)

CHILDREN

(*Dancing about as before.*)
Oh, we'll have a tasty dish!
Father's gone to catch a fish!

II.

SCENE: *The sea-shore. During this scene the "Barcarolle" from "Oberon" is to be played softly and at a distance. The* MAN *enters with his net. This he casts several times into the sea; and several times he draws it out without finding anything in it.*

MAN

There is no use. I might as well go home.
No fish to-day. Through all that wave-tossed foam
They will not come.

(*He gathers up his net and starts to go out, then stops.*)

But just once more I'll try.
My wife will scold if there's no fish to fry.

(*He throws the net once more into the sea.*)

Ha! There is something shining in the net!

(*He draws the net in quickly. In it there is a large* GOLDEN FISH.)

It gleams like gold. A fish! I never yet

Saw such a fish! I am a lucky man!
Happy my wife, with such fish in the pan!

GOLDEN FISH

(*In a high, sharp, yet musical voice.*)
Aie! Aie! Have mercy!

MAN

What is that I hear?

GOLDEN FISH

Have mercy! Spare me!

MAN

The fish spoke—that's clear.
A talking fish I never heard before—

GOLDEN FISH

Have mercy! Spare me! Cast me on the shore,
Where rescuing waves can reach me. I will give
A boon, to last you long as you shall live.

MAN

A golden fish that talks just like a man
Is better in the sea than in the pan.
So I will free you since you promise me
A fair reward if I shall set you free.

(*He throws the* GOLDEN FISH *back into the sea. As it disappears there is a flash of light and a strain of music.*)

GOLDEN FISH

(*In the distance, from the sea.*)
Should you have any need, call out to me.
You'll find me swimming in the deep blue sea.
And for your kindness to the Golden Fish—
You've but to ask; and you shall have your wish.

(*Again there is a flash of golden light and a strain of music from the sea.*)

MAN

(*Gathering up his net in excitement.*)
A fish that speaks from out sea-waves' foam.
This news won't keep. So I must hurry home.
(*He goes out hurriedly.*)

III.

SCENE: *Same as the first scene. The fragments of the tub still lie on the ground. The* WIFE *is hanging the wash on the line. The* CHILDREN *are sitting on the ground, making mud pies, and quarreling.*)

GIRL

Look out! You've put your foot right in my pie!

BOY

Well, I don't care!— That's right! Begin to cry!
(*The* GIRL *slaps the* BOY.)

BOY

Ouch! Look what you're doing! You hit me in the eye!

WIFE

Keep quiet! You quarreling children! Don't you know
I have enough of trouble?

BOY

Yes, that's so.

CHILDREN

Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Mother can't wash! She broke her tub!
(*They dance back and forth as before, and repeat.*)
(*The* MAN *enters, carrying his empty net.*)

MAN

Oh, Wife! Oh, Wife! I have strange news to tell!

WIFE

You have, have you! Well, where's your fish?—Well?—
. . . Well? . . .

MAN

Fish?

WIFE

Fish—yes, fish.

MAN

Why, yes, I caught a fish.

WIFE

Where is it?

MAN

Why, it said whatever wish
I made, it would be granted.

WIFE

Let me see
That fish.

MAN

It's gone. I set the poor thing free.

WIFE

You stupid! Why?

MAN

You should have heard, like me,
Its voice—like church-bells on a Sunday ringing
Through gusts of wind when all the leaves are singing—
"And for your kindness to the Golden Fish,
"You've but to ask; and you shall have your wish!"
That's what it said. And through the waters green
It swam away. This have I heard and seen.

CHILDREN

(*Dancing back and forth and singing, as before.*)
Give me a wish! Give me a wish!
It will be granted by a golden fish!

WIFE

What did you wish? Come tell me quick! Come! Come!
Don't stand there, stupid, as if you were dumb!

MAN

The fish—you see—he took me by surprise—

WIFE

Don't stand there like an owl with blinking eyes!
What did you wish?

MAN

I didn't wish at all.

WIFE

Well, you're a fool! There's nothing else to call
A man like you. Why here I rub and rub
My arms off, washing with a worn-out tub!
It makes me angry!—Oh, it makes me mad!
To think of all the things we might have had.
I need a tub—and clothes-pins—and a line—
This one is always breaking.

(*She jerks the clothes-line. It breaks, letting the clothes fall to the ground.*)

Now that's fine!
We could have had these things just for a wish.
Were you afraid of one poor, little fish?
Go back and find him swimming in the sea
And wish a wash-tub and clothes-line for me.

GIRL

I want a doll.

BOY

I want a nice new toy.
Ask for mine first.

GIRL

You horrid, selfish boy!

WIFE

What are you waiting for? Aren't you going to go?

MAN

I think it wouldn't be polite, you know,
To ask so soon—

WIFE

Polite! A little fish!
You hurry now! See that I get my wish!
(*She threatens the* MAN, *who goes out hastily.*)

IV.

SCENE: *The sea-shore, as in the Second Scene. Music as before. The* MAN *enters and stands gazing out to sea. Finally he speaks, but obviously not very willingly.*)

MAN

O friend, O noble, generous Golden Fish!
My wife has made me come to claim my wish.
(*There is a flash of light, and music; and the voice of the* GOLDEN FISH *is heard in the distance.*)

GOLDEN FISH

Speak, Fisherman, whatever it may be—
Speak, for I listen from the calm green sea.

MAN

She wants a tub and clothes-line. And the boy—
No, the girl first—a doll— He wants a toy.

GOLDEN FISH

You ask for little. I have heard your wish.
Go home. 'Tis granted. Thank the Golden Fish.

(*With a flash of light the disappearance of the fish is indicated. The* MAN *goes out. Music as before.*)

V.

SCENE: *Same as the Third Scene and the First, except that on the bench a new wash-tub is standing. The* WIFE *is busily and happily engaged in hanging out clothes on a brand-new clothes-line. The* BOY *has some simple toy, and the* GIRL *a small doll. They appear unusually good-natured and happy.*

GIRL

This doll's the sweetest, sweetest, sweetest, sweet!

BOY

It does look nice. I bet it's good to eat.

(*He takes the doll and pretends to bite it. The* GIRL *laughs.*)

GIRL

(*Snatching the doll away.*)
Oh, don't you dare! That is the nicest fish,
To give each one of us our dearest wish!

WIFE

Oh, Children, Children, such a lovely tub!
It will be only fun to wash and scrub.

CHILDREN

(*Singing and dancing as before.*)
Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!

Mother does her washing in a nice new tub!
(*The* MAN *enters.*)

WIFE

Look! Look! My tub!

GIRL

My doll! My doll!

BOY

My toy!

WIFE

Husband, that fish has made them wild with joy.

CHILDREN

(*Singing and dancing as before.*)
Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Mother does her washing with a nice new tub!

MAN

Well, isn't all this nice! I'm glad I caught
That fish, with all the happiness he's brought!

VI.

SCENE: *The same. The* WIFE *is washing; the* MAN *is gazing out to sea.*

CHILDREN

(*Singing and dancing as before, but now not so happily.*)
Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
It's a week since Mother got her nice new tub!
She's getting tired of it. Rub-a-dub-dub!

WIFE

Rub-a-dub-dub-a-dub-dub-a-dub-dub-dub!
I bend my back all day above this tub.

MAN

But it's so shiny, bright, and clean, and new—
You know I almost wish that I were you,
I'd like to use it, had I wash to do.

WIFE

Well goodness sakes alive, I wish so too!

CHILDREN

Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
It's a week since Mother got her nice new tub.
She's getting tired of it. Rub-a-dub-dub!

WIFE

Keep quiet! It's enough, and more, to know
I have to wash, without your saying so!
Each every minute jumping up and down
As if you each were just a silly clown!
(*To the* MAN.)
And you—and you—and you—and you—and you—
Can you find nothing better in the world to do
Than stand around and gape at me at work?
You said you wished—now I suppose you'll shirk—
You said you'd like to wash with my new tub—
Well, there it is— Now get to work and rub
These clothes.

MAN

Oh, you mistake. I've not the skill
To wash these garments. I would do it ill.

WIFE

Come, come. I'm tired. Come on and take my place.
Now— It won't hurt you. Don't make such a face.

MAN

Well if you're tired I will. You may rely
On me to help you.—I can only try.

(*The* MAN *bends over the tub and begins to stir the clothes around slowly and without enthusiasm. His* WIFE *watches him critically with increasing disgust as she perceives how clumsily he performs his task.*)

CHILDREN

Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Father's doing the washing with the nice new tub!

WIFE

Well, of all ways to wash yours is the worst!
My goodness sakes, I don't see how you durst
Pretend that you can wash. Now go away
And let me finish. You would take all day;
And the clothes would not be clean—or torn—
Oh, goodness me, why was I ever born!

MAN

Well, I but did my best.

BOY

Rub-dub-dub-dub!
Father's stopped washing with the nice new tub.

MAN

Keep quiet, you little nuisance! Where's your toy?

BOY

Oh, it's no good. Do you suppose a boy
Does not get tired of things?

MAN

Oh, so you, too,
Are never happy without something new!

WIFE

Look here, why is it I must wash and scrub
With any new or any broken tub?

Don't you remember that the golden fish
Promised to grant whatever you might wish?

MAN

Well, and he did.

WIFE

But why not wish once more?

MAN

I did wish once.

WIFE

Now go down to the shore
And wish again.

MAN

What shall I wish for now?

WIFE

I'd like to feel a crown upon my brow,
Live in a castle, dress in silk and gold.

MAN

You would, would you?—Well, I suppose you'll scold
Until you get your wish.

WIFE

I surely will.

MAN

Some day of wishing you will get your fill.

WIFE

Well, are you going?

MAN

I'll go just this once more,
But not again.

WIFE

Go! Hurry to the shore.
And for these things I've told you you must wish
Soon as you find your marvelous Golden Fish.
(*The* MAN *goes out.*)

VII.

SCENE: *The sea-shore. The* MAN *enters. "Barcarolle" from "Oberon" as before.*

MAN

O Golden Fish, there in the deep green sea,
Once more I come.
(*From the sea the voice of the* GOLDEN FISH *is heard.*)

GOLDEN FISH

What do you want of me?
Twice have I granted.

MAN

I have one more wish
To make, not willingly, O Golden Fish.
My wife has made me ask it; so once more
I stand beseeching on the wave-worn shore.

GOLDEN FISH

Look that you make not many. You may get
More than you bargained for.

MAN

Oh, she was set
On having one more wish. Not willingly
I've called to you out in the deep, green sea.

GOLDEN FISH

What does she want? Whatever it may be,
Speak, for I listen from the deep, green sea.

MAN

She's tired of washing with her nice new tub.
She wants to be a queen. She wants to scrub
No more. She wants a crown and castle high
With towers and turrets reaching to the sky,
I guess. She wants a gown of silk and gold.

GOLDEN FISH

She wants, I think, more than her hands can hold.
You ask for much. But you shall have your wish.
Go home. 'Tis granted. Thank the Golden Fish.

(*There is a flash of light and a burst of music as the* GOLDEN FISH *finishes his speech. The* MAN *turns and goes out.*)

VIII.

SCENE: *The yard before the* MAN'S *home as in first scene, except that the cottage has disappeared, also the tub and clothes-line. In the distance the turrets of a castle are visible above the trees. The* WIFE *enters. She wears a dress of silk and gold. She looks thoroughly uncomfortable and acts as if she did not know what to do with herself. After a moment the* BOY *and* GIRL *enter. The* GIRL *carries an immense doll. They, too, look as if they did not know what to do. The* GIRL *stumbles on something and drops the doll.*

BOY

You've smashed your doll.

GIRL

Well, I have plenty more.

(*She pays no more attention to the matter.*)

BOY

What shall we do?

GIRL

Let's go down to the shore.

BOY

Oh, no. We've been so many times before.

WIFE

Why do you children mope around this way?
For goodness sakes, go off somewhere and play!

GIRL

What shall we play at?

BOY

Tell us what to do.

WIFE

How do I know? I really feel so blue
I cannot think.

BOY

Now that you are a queen
You do not have to think.

WIFE

I've never seen
Time pass so slowly.

BOY

Say! It might be fun
To move the moon around and call the sun
And have it rise up in the west at night

Instead of setting, and have dark and light
Just when we want it.

WIFE

Now that is a wish!
Where is your father? Send him to the Fish.

CHILDREN

(*Dancing about and singing.*)
Father! Father! Mother has a wish!
Go and tell it to the Golden Fish.
(*The* MAN *enters.*)

WIFE

Well, here you are at last!

MAN

What is it now?

WIFE

When you speak to a queen you ought to bow.

MAN

(*Bowing.*)
Well, I have bowed. What do you want of me?

WIFE

I order you to go down to the sea—

MAN

You do not mean you have another wish?

WIFE

I have. Go tell it to the Golden Fish.

CHILDREN

(*Dancing back and forth and singing.*)
Father! Father! Mother has a wish.
Go and tell it to the Golden Fish.

MAN

You are a queen; you rule a fair domain.
What is there you can ever wish again?

BOY

We want to rule the moon, and make the sun
Rise in the west once more when day is done.

MAN

Keep quiet. And do not say such silly things.

WIFE

It is not silly. I have gowns and rings
Of gold and silver, bracelets and jewels,
Chairs of rare wood and carven ivory stools,
Beds of rich down, and woven tapestries
Upon the walls. And I may take my ease
The livelong day.

MAN

And is not that enough?

WIFE

Enough! It's nothing. Can I calm the rough
And boisterous sea? Can I turn back the sun,
Or light the stars, or bid the day be done?
I'm nothing but a low, down-trodden worm.
(*She bursts into tears.*)
Oh, don't stand there and frown and stare and squirm.
Hurry! Do something. Now you know my wish,
Hasten and tell it to the Golden Fish.

MAN

That I'll not do. I tell you never more
Will I call to the Golden Fish upon the shore.

CHILDREN

Father is stubborn! Father is mean!
He won't obey Mother, though she's a Queen!

MAN

Keep quiet!

BOY

We won't.

GIRL

We won't.

WIFE

I'll have my wish.

MAN

I'll ask no more boons from the Golden Fish.

WIFE

Then we will shriek and scold—

BOY

and howl—

GIRL

and cry—

(*They do so.*)

WIFE

You'll find peace nowhere underneath the sky
Until you go and get us all we wish.
Hasten and ask it from the Golden Fish!

MAN

Well, I will go this once. But nevermore.
Stop crying. I am going down to the shore.
(*The* MAN *runs out.*)

IX.

SCENE: *The sea-shore. It is almost dark. Thunder can be heard from time to time above the roaring of the waves. The* MAN *enters. He appears much terrified.*

MAN

O Golden Fish, I come unwillingly,
Yet once more call you from the angry sea!
(*Only the sound of the waves and thunder answer him.*)

MAN

You do not answer. Do not bear me ill.
I come again, but not of my own will.
My wife has made me do it. Though I fear
Out in the roaring sea you will not hear.
(*There is a flash of light on the sea; and the voice of the* GOLDEN FISH *is heard, harsh, this time, and deep, matching the thunder.*)

GOLDEN FISH

Fool! Know you not Fortune when she speaks to thee
In a weak fish's voice from out the sea?
Be sure I hear you, wheresoer you be.
Fortune hears endless wishes; but she grants
Few, and but seldom, to her suppliants.
Are you not satisfied? You wished for much.
I granted. Now you come again. To such
I give but one wish more.

MAN

Not my own will
Has brought me here. Many your gifts— But still
My wife has asked for more.

GOLDEN FISH

Well, speak your wish.

MAN

This time she bids me ask, O Golden Fish—

GOLDEN FISH

Speak not her wishes. For she gets no more.
Speak your own wish, there on the sounding shore,

For the last time. What is it you desire,
For her, for you? The lightning's blinding fire
Blasts the dark sea. No longer may I stay.
Down to the safe, cool depths I must away.

MAN

It's hard to know— O Golden Fish, I guess
All that I wish is quiet and happiness,
Such as I knew before.

GOLDEN FISH

You have your wish.
For the last time you see the Golden Fish.
(*Thunder and a flash of light. The* MAN *runs out.*)

X.

SCENE: *Same as scene one. The castle has disappeared. The cottage is once more in place. Before it the old tub is standing on the bench. The* WIFE *is bending over it happily. She and the* CHILDREN *wear the clothes they wore in the first scene.*

CHILDREN

(*Dancing back and forth and singing as before.*)
Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Mother is washing with the same old tub!

WIFE

Oh, dear, it seems so nice to wash and scrub
Once more with my old, worn, and broken tub!
(*The* MAN *enters, as if frightened at what he expects to see. He stands speechless with astonishment. The* CHILDREN *dance up to him, singing happily.*)

CHILDREN

Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Mother is washing with the same old tub!

WIFE

Oh, so you're back. See, here is my old tub.
Isn't it nice? Now I can wash and scrub
Just as I used to do. Rub-a-dub-dub!

CHILDREN

(*Dancing back and forth and singing.*)
Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!
Mother is washing with the same old tub!

MAN

So you are happy?

WIFE

Why, of course we are.

MAN

I thought you wanted to rule sun and star—

WIFE

What nonsense. When I have my good old tub,
And soap and water and my clothes to scrub!

MAN

Well of all things! So we've all got our wish!
At last we're happy. Thank the Golden Fish!

NOTES ON PRODUCTION

Owing to the frequent change of scene from the cottage to the sea-shore and back again no elaborate scenery should be used. If an outdoor scene is available it may be used

for both scenes; or the play may be given with only hangings for a background.

For the cottage scenes a bench, a tub, and a clothes-line are all that is needed. If desired the edge of the cottage may be made from wall-board or card-board. The castle and the distant sea may be made in the same way. The cottage, the castle, and the distant sea may be omitted entirely.

For the sea-shore scenes all that is necessary is a board, or a long strip of cloth or card-board, painted blue or green, laid on the stage at the back. If an outdoor scene is used there should, of course, be a blue back-drop behind the sea strip to represent the sky.

The changes of scene should be made very rapidly. In fact the play should be given briskly, without dragging. In speaking the lines the rhythm of the verse should be brought out distinctly and the rhyme-words paused on and slightly accented.

The only actual appearance of the Golden Fish is in the second scene. For this a fish may be cut from gold paper.

ALICE IN BOOKLAND[1]

A PAGEANT FOR CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK

By

MAUDE STEWART BEAGLE

Author of "The Book Review," "Womanhood," "The Growth of American Fashion," and other pageants.

[1] Included by courtesy of the author. A fee of $5.00 must be paid for each performance, to Miss Maude S. Beagle, 1623 Montclaire Ave., Flint, Mich.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE REAL PEOPLE

The Librarian
The Little Girl *who takes the book "Alice in Wonderland."*
The Girl *who takes "Mrs. Wiggs."*
The Romantic Girl
The Fat Boy *who lisps.*
The Girl *who likes poetry.*
Two Tiny Tots *who like picture books.*
The Girl *who is writing the theme.*
The Girl *who likes "Miss Alcott's books."*

THE BOOK PEOPLE

Alice in Wonderland
The White Rabbit
The Christmas Carol
Scrooge
Scrooge's Nephew
Two Benevolent Gentlemen
Bob
Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch
    Mrs. Wiggs
    Billy Wiggs
    Asia, Australia and Europena Wiggs
    Jim Wiggs
    Other Children
Ramona
    A Spanish Dancer

Toby Tyler

TOBY TYLER

MR. STUBBS (*the little monkey*)

THE SKELETON

THE FAT LADY

JOB LORD

THE FREAKS

ALBINIA TWINS

SNAKE CHARMER

SWORD SWALLOWER

TIGHT-ROPE WALKER

WILD GIRL, *etc.*

Hiawatha

INDIAN DANCERS

Courtship of Miles Standish

JOHN ALDEN

PRISCILLA

Picture Books

THE BROWNIE CHORUS

RED RIDING HOOD

RIDING HOOD'S MOTHER

THE WOLF

CINDERELLA AND PRINCE CHARMING

MOTHER GOOSE CHORUS

Eight Cousins

HIGHLAND FLING DANCERS

Old Fashioned Girl

SOLO AND CHORUS "Old Fashioned Girl"

ALICE IN BOOKLAND

The scene is the Children's Library. The walls are lined with shelves of books. Bright colored posters are on the wall, chintz curtains at the windows, and several low tables surrounded by small chairs are in the background. At the right is the librarian's desk. A pot of flowers and the usual librarian's equipment can be seen and the LIBRARIAN, *herself, a pleasant faced person, as librarians should be, is seen reading. Several children are already reading at the tables or searching for books on the shelves. Hanging on the wall back-stage is a large sign with the words "Children's Library" painted on it. A* LITTLE GIRL *enters and goes to the* LIBRARIAN'S *desk.*

LITTLE GIRL. I want a book about a girl and a rabbit.

LIBRARIAN. Do you know the name of the book?

LITTLE GIRL. No, but it has a picture of a rabbit on the cover.

LIBRARIAN. (*Looking at books on the shelves.*) I think this must be the book you want. It is "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." (*She holds the book so the child can see.*) There is the white rabbit on the cover and here are Alice and the funny queen who says, "Off with her head."

LITTLE GIRL. (*Turning the pages.*) Who is this funny lady?

LIBRARIAN. That is the Duchess who used to put pepper on everybody. She had a little baby that turned into a pig.

LITTLE GIRL. I think I'd like that story. I'll take it, please.

LIBRARIAN. Very well. Have you a card?

(*The child produces the card and they return to the desk where the card is stamped and the book is given to her.*

The LIBRARIAN *resumes her reading and gradually the children leave and at the same time the room seems to become very quiet. The* LIBRARIAN'S *head droops until she seems to be dozing. Suddenly a strange, yet familiar* LITTLE GIRL *enters. She has long light hair, a blue dress and ruffled white apron, white sox and black strap slippers. She tip-toes softly around the shelves opening covers of books, peering inside and slowly shaking her head. She runs left and motions excitedly to someone and a delightful white rabbit, wearing a red coat and carrying a small fan and white gloves, comes hurrying in. It is* ALICE *and the* RABBIT *from "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." She whispers in his ear, mysteriously. He shakes his head and looks around. They go hand-in-hand to the desk and gaze at the* LIBRARIAN *as she sleeps. They make the rounds of the room, pausing before the sign. They stare first at the sign, then at each other, shake their heads wisely and tip-toe back to the desk where they stand facing the sleeping* LIBRARIAN.)

ALICE. Ahem!

RABBIT. Ahem!

(*The* LIBRARIAN *starts, opens her eyes and jumps with surprise as she sees the strange little figures before her.*)

LIBRARIAN. Was there something you wished?

ALICE. Yes! We want our book.

LIBRARIAN. Which book is *your* book?

ALICE. The book we live in. We can't find it.

LIBRARIAN. (*Suddenly recognizing them.*) Did it have a red cover and was it called "Alice in Wonderland"?

RABBIT. It was, and it had my picture on the cover like this. (*He strikes a Napoleon pose.*)

LIBRARIAN. (*Smiling.*) I'm sorry. Your book is out just now. A dear little girl in the fourth grade took it.

RABBIT. (*Distressed.*) But what shall we do? Where can we live? We've lost our home. (*He rings his hands.*)

LIBRARIAN. Perhaps you could temporarily live in this blue book. It is called "Little Women," a very pleasant place to live. I should think.

RABBIT. (*Excitedly.*) No, no, I don't like women. They always have brooms to chase rabbits with.

LIBRARIAN. Then there is a yellow book called "Tom Sawyer," which is very popular.

ALICE. (*Decidedly.*) No, I'm not allowed to play with boys and especially when Mother doesn't know their family.

LIBRARIAN. (*Enthusiastically.*) Oh, I think I know one you would like. How would "Peter Rabbit" do?

RABBIT. (*Decidedly.*) Not at all. I know of him and he comes of very common stock. His family actually live at the roots of a big tree and his mother does her own washing.

ALICE. Well, what are we to do? (*They both look at the* LIBRARIAN *as though it were her place to solve their problems.*)

LIBRARIAN. I don't see what I can do unless you would like to stay here until your book returns and work for me. This is "Bookland" and most people find it a very interesting place.

ALICE. (*Thoughtfully.*) "Bookland"? I've been in "Wonderland" and I've been in the "Looking-glass" but I've never been in "Bookland." (*Turning to the* RABBIT.) What do you say? Shall we try it?

RABBIT. (*To the* LIBRARIAN.) What are the duties?

LIBRARIAN. You may be my pages and get the books that the children ask for, put books away and keep the children quiet.

RABBIT. (*In a business-like way.*) And the pay?

LIBRARIAN. (*Figuring with her pencil.*) Well, I should say one ice-cream cone and one nice head of lettuce, each day, would be very fair pay.

ALICE. Make it one lollipop instead of a cone.

RABBIT. And carrots instead of lettuce.

LIBRARIAN. Very well. Lollipops and carrots it shall be. Now you may begin by putting away these books and I'll ring my bell when you are needed.

(*The* RABBIT *and* ALICE *carry books to the shelves, working busily arranging them, while the* LIBRARIAN *returns to her work. Enters a* LITTLE GIRL *about twelve years old who goes to the desk and returns her book.*)

GIRL. Have you a good Christmas story?

LIBRARIAN. Yes, we have the most famous Christmas story in the world. (*She rings her bell and* ALICE *comes to the desk.*) Please bring me Dickens' "Christmas Carol."

(ALICE *brings the book which is charged to the* GIRL *and she goes to one of the tables and reads the book. As she reads, a scene from the book is enacted at the left of the stage. The* LIBRARIAN *and the* GIRL *should not observe the actors, giving the impression that the scene is what is going on in the* GIRL'S *mind.*)

(EBENEZER SCROOGE *and his* CLERK *are on stage for a moment or two, the action is pantomime. A young man bursts into the room so quickly that this is the first intimation* SCROOGE *has of his approach.*)

FRED. A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE. Bah! Humbug!

FRED. Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure?

SCROOGE. I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED. (*Gayly.*) Come, then. What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE. Bah! Humbug!

FRED. Don't be cross, uncle.

SCROOGE. What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his hair. He should!

FRED. (*Pleadingly.*) Uncle!

SCROOGE. Nephew, keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED. Keep it! But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE. Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!

FRED. There are many things from which I might have derived good by which I have not profited, I dare say; Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come around—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shutup hearts freely and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket I believe it has done me good and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!

(*The* CLERK *in the tank involuntarily applauds, only to become immediately sensible of the impropriety, pokes the fire, and extinguishes the last frail spark.*)

SCROOGE. (*To* CLERK.) Let me hear another sound from you, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! (*Turning to his nephew.*) You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

FRED. Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow.

(*Under his breath* SCROOGE *mutters he would see him in some dire extremity first.*)

FRED. But why? Why?

SCROOGE. Why did you get married?

FRED. Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE. Because you fell in love. Good afternoon!

FRED. Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE. Good afternoon.

FRED. I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So a merry Christmas, uncle.

SCROOGE. Good afternoon.

FRED. And a happy New Year.

SCROOGE. Good afternoon. (*The* NEPHEW *leaves the room without an angry word. He stops at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the* CLERK. SCROOGE *mutters.*) There's another fellow, my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

(*The* CLERK *in letting out* SCROOGE'S NEPHEW *lets two other people in. They are portly* GENTLEMEN, *pleasant to behold.*)

FIRST GENTLEMAN. Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE. Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago this very night.

FIRST GENTLEMAN. We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner. (SCROOGE *frowns at the ominous word "liberality."*) At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE. Are there no prisons?

GENTLEMEN. Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE. And the Union workhouses? Are they still in operation?

GENTLEMEN. They are. Still I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE. The treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigor, then?

GENTLEMEN. Both very busy, sir.

SCROOGE. Oh! I was afraid from what you said at first that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course. I'm very glad to hear it.

GENTLEMEN. Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude, a few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for? We choose this time, because it is the time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt and Abundance rejoices.

SCROOGE. Nothing!

GENTLEMEN. You wish to remain anonymous?

SCROOGE. I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people

merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned; they cost enough. Those who are badly off must go there.

GENTLEMEN. Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

SCROOGE. If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. Besides, excuse me, I don't know that.

GENTLEMEN. But you might know it.

SCROOGE. It's not my business. It's enough for a man to understand his own business and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen.

(*The* GENTLEMEN *withdraw and* SCROOGE *resumes his labor with an improved opinion of himself. Darkness has descended and outside the windows may be seen people running about with flaming lamps to light their way. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stoops down at* SCROOGE'S *keyhole to regale him with a Christmas Carol, but at the first sound of:*

God bless you, merry gentlemen,
May nothing you dismay—

SCROOGE *seizes the ruler with such energy of action that the singer flees in terror. At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrives. With ill-will,* SCROOGE *dismounts from his stool and signs to the* CLERK *in the tank, who instantly snuffs his candle out and puts on his hat.*)

SCROOGE. You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose.

CLERK. If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE. It's not convenient, and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill used, I'll be bound. (*The* CLERK *smiles faintly.*) And yet, you

don't think me ill used when I pay a day's wages for no work.

CLERK. Christmas comes but once a year, sir.

SCROOGE. A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December. But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning. (SCROOGE *walks out with a low growl.*)

(*Enter* GIRL *about twelve carrying books.*)

GIRL. I want a new book by Louisa May Alcott. I am returning "Little Women" and I've read nearly all of hers.

LIBRARIAN. Have you read "Eight Cousins"?

GIRL. No, I've never read that one.

LIBRARIAN. Alice, bring in the "Eight Cousins." I'm sure you will like it. It is all about seven jolly Scotch lads and their one girl cousin.

(*Enter* ALICE *with the book. The* GIRL *goes to the table to read and eight children in Scotch costumes dance the "Highland Fling."*)

GIRL. I think I'll like that book. It is so lively and jolly, and have you another one as good by Miss Alcott?

(*The* RABBIT *whispers to* ALICE, *but she nods her head and hand in hand they skip to the shelf for another book.*)

GIRL. (*As she receives the book.*) "The Old Fashioned Girl!" Oh! I'm sure that will be good! (*She turns the pages. Enter soloist who sings "The Old Fashioned Girl." A chorus dressed in hoop-skirts and pantalettes comes in on the chorus of the song and does a little dance. The soloist may be either a girl or boy.*)

THE OLD FASHIONED GIRL OF MY DREAMS

Somewhere in the past
There's a girl I've known well
She's a sweet little fairy, I'll say,

She dainty and quaint
Like a rosebud in June
She's a girl of a by-gone day.

She's the old fashioned girl of my dreams
She's quiet and sweet and serene
She has eyes of deep blue
And a heart that is true
She's the old fashioned girl of my dreams.

She has a bonnet of blue
With a rose on it, too
And her hair is a mass of soft curls
Her hoop skirt is new
And her pantalettes too
She's different from all other girls.

(*Enter small* Boy *with red hair and freckles who forgets to take off his hat.* Alice *takes it off and hands it to him.*)

Boy. (*Advancing to the desk.*) Say, have you any good books for boys?

Librarian. Lots of them. Ever read "Little Men" or "Little Lord Fauntleroy"?

Boy. Yep! I've read those but I want a book about regular guys—something funny.

Librarian. Here we are, just the book you'll like. (*She rings the bell and the* Rabbit *comes forward.*) Bring me "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch." (*He takes the book and goes to the table.*)

(*A plain kitchen table is brought in by* Alice *and the* Rabbit *with a few dishes, mostly bowls and spoons, on it. Enters* Mrs. Wiggs *with her three children,* Asia, Australia *and* Europena.)

MRS. WIGGS. (*Very cheerfully.*) We're goin' to have some Irish pertater soup fer dinner: The boys'll be here soon and we'll have to hurry to get through 'fore the children begin to come fer Sunday School. (*She busies herself setting the table.*)

ASIA. If there don't come Chris and Pete a'ready. I bet they've had their dinner an' jes come early to git some of ours.

MRS. WIGGS. Why, Asia, that ain't hospitile an' Chris with one leg, too. 'Taint no trouble at all. All I got to do is to put a little more water in the soup an' me an' Jim won't take but one piece of bread.

(*Enter* JIM *and* BILLY. *All children take places at table and* MRS. WIGGS *goes out and gets kettle of soup which she dishes out. The children eat hungrily.* BILLY *drinking his.*)

BILLY. Gee! I've drinken so much that when I swallers a piece of bread I can hear it splash. (*All laugh.*)

MRS. WIGGS. Well you boys git up now and go out and bring me a couple of planks to put acrost the cheers fer the childern to set on.

(*The boys go out and bring the planks and make benches by putting them across chairs. They add a couple of old boxes and arrange these benches in two rows. About a dozen children of various sizes file in and take seats, all talking at once.* MRS. WIGGS *stands in front of them with an old hymn book in her hand.*)

MRS. WIGGS. Now, you must all hush talking so we kin all sing a hymn; I'll read it over, and then we'll all sing it together. (*She picks out some old fashioned hymn and they all sing it out of tune and in different keys.*)

MRS. WIGGS. What did we study about last week?

CHRIS. You can search me.

(*Two girls giggle. The rest look blank.*)

MRS. WIGGS. Don't you remember what the Lord give Moses upon the mountain?

(*One child raises hand and shouts.*)

CHILD. Yas'm, I know. Lord give Moses ten tallers, an' he duveled 'em.

MRS. WIGGS. Joe, who were the first two apostles?

JOE. (*Promptly.*) David and Goliath.

MRS. WIGGS. Why, Joe!

(*Just then a boy on the back row throws a paper wad and hits her in the eye. All crowd around and try to help her, all talking at once.*)

FIRST CHILD. Miss Wiggs, I know who hit you.

SECOND CHILD. Teacher, can I git a drink?

THIRD CHILD. Mith Wiggs make Tommy thap thpittin terbaccer juice in my hat.

JIM. Here Ma. I'll tie yer eye up fer you.

(*He ties an old stocking leg around her head over the left eye.*)

MRS. WIGGS. Now, all take yer seats again and be quiet: Australia, where is Bethlehem?

AUSTRALIA. Dunno!

MRS. WIGGS. Mary Ann, where is it?

MARY ANN. (*Very importantly.*) Ain't it in Alabama?

MRS. WIGGS. No. It's in the Holy Land. Chris, have you got a verse to say?

CHRIS. Sure.

MRS. WIGGS. Well, let's hear it.

CHRIS. "Jesus wept."

MRS. WIGGS. Land Sakes. The length of that verse must have hurt you to learn. (*At this moment the boys on the back seat pull out a chair on the front row and the board goes down with the little girls, some of whom cry and others make faces at the boys.* MRS. WIGGS *marches* BILLY *off stage by the ear and after fixing the bench and re-*

seating the little girls, she continues.) "What is the golden text?" (*All children in Chorus.*) Don't fuss. That's right; now we'll sing "Pull fer the Shore." (*They all sing loudly as before.*) (MRS. WIGGS *hushes them to silence and closes her eyes and clasps her hands, she then prays and when she finishes the prayer all the children run out with shouts and confusion followed by* MRS. WIGGS *shaking her head.* ALICE *and the* RABBIT *remove the table. The prayer:*) "O Lord!" "Help these here children to be good an' kind to each other, an' to their mas and' their pas. Make 'em thankful fer whatever they've got, even if it ain't but a little. Show us all how to live like you want us to live, an' praise God from whom all blessin's flow. Amen."

(*Enter tall pretty girl, very languid and romantic.*)

GIRL. (*Leaning on the desk and speaking gushingly.*) Oh! Miss Richmond, have you the book "Ramona"? I saw Dolores Del Rio last night in the moving picture and she was simply marvelous. Don't you think Dolores Del Rio is gr-a-nd? And what do you think Willy Jones said? (*She simpers and giggles and leans across the desk.*) He said—that I looked just like her. I'd love to have a Spanish Shawl like hers and dance to that wonderful music, wouldn't you?

LIBRARIAN. We have it and I'm sure you will like it.

(*As the* GIRL *opens the book the* RABBIT *brings in a Spanish Shawl and hat which he puts on the* GIRL *and thus transformed she dances a Spanish waltz to the tune of the popular tune "Ramona."*)

(*Enter a fat boy who lisps.*)

BOY. Thay, Mith Ritzman, have you got any book about a thircuth? (*He means circus.*)

LIBRARIAN. (*To* ALICE.) What circus books have we in today?

ALICE Well, there's "Under the Lilacs" and "Toby Tyler."

Boy. That's the one. Gimme "Toby Tyler."

(*He seats himself to read while the following scene is enacted.* Alice *and the* Rabbit *bring in the circus properties such as the peanut stand, etc.*)

SCENE FROM "TOBY TYLER"

(*The scene is on the circus grounds, a peanut stand in center with a small red-headed boy tending it, peddlers with balloons, banners, etc., are crying their wares, music in the background.* Toby *holds a small monkey in his arms.*)

Toby. (*Talking to the monkey.*) Do you know Mr. Stubbs, I wish I had never run away with the circus. Mr. Lord treats me awful mean, he does. Tonight he says I can't have any supper and he would have licked me if he had dared. Old Ben won't let him though.

(*The living* Skeleton *enters and stands looking at* Toby *and the monkey.* Toby *hugs the monkey and starts to cry.*)

Skeleton. What's the matter, little fellow?

Toby. (*Looking up, very much surprised.*) Mr. Lord is mean to me and I'm sorry I ever ran away from Uncle Daniel.

Skeleton. Oh-ho! so you ran away with the circus, did you? And Job Lord is mean to you.

Toby. (*Sobbing.*) Yes, I did, and there hain't any boy in any Sunday School book that was half as sorry he'd been bad as I am. It's awful and now I can't have any supper, cause I stopped to talk to Mr. Stubbs.

Skeleton. Job won't raise no row while I'm around, but who is Mr. Stubbs?

Toby. The monkey. He's my best friend.

Voice Outside. Samuel, Samuel! Come in this moment

or you'll catch your death o' cold and you'll be wheezin' half the night.

TOBY. (*Frightened.*) Who's that?

SKELETON. (*Looking over his shoulder cautiously and then whispering to* TOBY.) That's my wife, Lily. She's the fat woman in the show and she's always yellin' at me like that every time I get out for a little air.

(*Enter the* FAT WOMAN *in a bright colored evening dress.*)

TOBY. (*Opening his eyes.*) Is—is that your wife?

SKELETON. Yep, that's her. She weighs pretty nigh four hundred, though posters says she weighs over six hundred and she earns most as much as I do.

FAT WOMAN. Sam-u-el, are you ever coming in?

SKELETON. (*Seating himself on a stool.*) Not yet, my angel. Come here and see Job's new boy.

FAT WOMAN. Worrying about you is just wearing me away. I shan't be worth anything to a circus pretty soon.

SKELETON. This is my wife, Lily, Mrs. Treat. This is my flower, my queen, Mr.—Mr.—

TOBY. My name is Toby Tyler.

FAT WOMAN. My! My! What a little chap you are?

SKELETON. Yes, he is small and he won't grow any either if Job Lord don't give him any supper.

FAT WOMAN. He won't? (*Rolling up her sleeves.*) Wait till I give him a piece of my mind. I'll shake him up. (*She goes into tent.*)

TOBY. Will she really shake him up?

SKELETON. She will if she says she will. That's a great woman, that.

TOBY. Yes, she's the greatest one I ever saw.

SKELETON. I mean she's got a great head.

(*Re-enter the fat woman with plate of sandwiches and pie.*)

FAT WOMAN. Here you are, Mr. Tyler, we'll see whether Job Lord will give you any supper.

(*Enter the Albino twins, Snake Charmer, Sword-Swallower, Giant and Dwarf, Tight-Rope Walker, etc., whom* SKELETON *introduces to* TOBY. *They are in the midst of a party when* JOB LORD *comes blustering in. He seizes* TOBY *by the collar and begins to thrash him but is stopped by the* FAT LADY *who gives* JOB *a punch that sends him sprawling. All the other characters laugh and clap their hands as the curtains close on them.*)

(*Enter* GIRL *with pile of books and note books in her arms.*)

GIRL. Have you any books on the period of George Washington? I wish to write a theme on the subject of custom and dress of the Eighteenth Century.

LIBRARIAN. (*Ringing her bell.* ALICE *and* RABBIT *both come to the desk.*) What have we on the Customs and Dress of the Eighteenth Century?

(ALICE *and* RABBIT *both look serious and* RABBIT *pulls one ear absentmindedly as he thinks. Then suddenly a bright thought strikes him. He whispers to* ALICE. *She claps her hands delightedly. Then joining hands, they do a few steps of the minuet, making a deep court bow, and then hurry to the shelves, bringing back several books which they give to the girl. As she goes to her table and opens the books, the Minuet Dancers enter and give the Court Minuet in powdered wigs and eighteenth century dress. Four couples may be used or only two as the director sees fit. Music and words for this song and dance may be found in the "Minuet" by Mozart, in Progressive Music Series Book III, published by Silver, Burdett and Company.*)

(*Enter pretty girl carrying books.*)

GIRL. I want my book renewed.

LIBRARIAN. More poetry, Eleanor?

GIRL. Yes, "Hiawatha." I think it's the loveliest of them all, may I keep it another week?

LIBRARIAN. Yes, indeed, and if you'll wait a few minutes I'll get you another by the same writer.

GIRL. By "Longfellow." Oh, I'd love to have it.

(*She goes to the table and as she reads, an Indian dance is given. After this scene* ALICE *goes to the shelf for "The Courtship of Miles Standish."*)

LIBRARIAN. Here is Longfellow's true love story of the old Puritan days. This is "The Courtship of Miles Standish."

(*Enter* PRISCILLA *in Puritan costume. The* RABBIT *carries in a spinning wheel and* ALICE *a chair and* PRISCILLA *seats herself and sings an old fashioned hymn as she spins. Enter* JOHN ALDEN.)

PRISCILLA. (*Rising and giving him her hand in greeting.*) I knew it was you when I heard your step in the passage. For I was thinking of you, as I sat here singing and spinning. (JOHN *sits bashfully opposite her, handing her a bunch of mayflowers as he does so.*)

PRISCILLA. (*Looking at the flowers.*)

I have been thinking all day
Dreaming all night and thinking all day of the hedge-rows of England.
They are in blossom now and the country is all like a garden.
Thinking of lanes and fields, and the song of the lark and the linnet.
Seeing the village street, and familiar faces of neighbors.
Going about as of old, and stopping to gossip together.
Kind are the people I live with and dear to me my religion.
Still my heart is so sad, that I wish myself back in old England.

You will say it is wrong, but I cannot help it: I almost
Wish myself back in Old England, I feel so lonely and wretched.

(*Her head drops into her hands.* JOHN *rises and stands with his hand on her shoulder.*)

Indeed I do not condemn you,
Stouter hearts than yours have quailed in this terrible winter:
Yours is tender and trusting, and needs a stronger to lean on;
So I have come to you now, with an offer and proffer of marriage
Made by a good man and true, Miles Standish the Captain of Plymouth.

PRISCILLA. (*Looking up startled and almost stunned.*)
If the great Captain of Plymouth is so very eager to wed me,
Why does he not come himself and take the trouble to woo me
If I am not worth the wooing, I surely am not worth the winning.

JOHN. (*Stuttering and embarrassed.*) The captain is busy. He has no time for such things.

PRISCILLA. (*Excited and angry.*)
Has no time for such things, as you call it before he is married,
Would he be likely to find it or make it after the wedding?
This is the way with you men, you don't understand us, you cannot
When you have made up your minds after thinking of this one and that one
Then you make known your desire with abrupt and sudden avowal

And are offended and hurt, and indignant perhaps that a woman
Does not respond at once to love that she never suspected
Had he but waited a while, had he only showed that he loved me
Even this captain of yours—who knows at last might have won me
Old and rough as he is; but now it never can happen.

(*She turns and walks away a few steps.*)

JOHN. (*Very much embarrassed.*)

But you don't understand, he is a gentleman born
And can trace his pedigree back to the Standish of Lancashire England
He is a man of honor and of noble and generous nature
Great of hear, magnanimous, courtly, courageous
Any woman in Plymouth, nay, any woman in England
Might be happy and proud to be called the wife of Miles Standish.

PRISCILLA. (*Turning around and breaking into laughter.*) Why don't you speak for yourself John?

(*She stretches out her hands. He takes a step forward and takes her hands, looking down into her eyes. Then putting her head down on his shoulder, he holds her in a close embrace for a moment and then arm in arm they leave the stage.*)

GIRL. (*Coming to the desk.*) Oh, I like this book. The poetry is so beautiful— May I take it, too?

LIBRARIAN. Certainly—I was sure you would like it. (*She changes the book and hands it to her and the girl goes out. Enter two tiny tots a boy and a girl, looking very shy.*) May I show you something?

CHILDREN. (*In unison.*) We want to see the picture books.

LIBRARIAN. Go with Alice and Rabbit and they will show you the picture books.

(ALICE *and the* RABBIT *take them by the hand, lead them to the table and seat them.*)

BOY. (*Turning pages of a book.*) Oh, gee! look what I've got. I've got the Brownies.

(*The girl looks over his shoulder and they turn the pages. Enter* BROWNIE CHORUS *who do an eccentric song and dance.*)

LITTLE GIRL. I've got "Red Riding Hood." See, there she is with her red hood and cloak.

BOY. And there's her mother giving her the basket. She's telling her to go to her grandmother's house.

LITTLE GIRL. And here's the picture where she stops to pick flowers, and—

BOY. Oh gee! look at the old wolf. I'll bet he'll eat her up!

(*The scene is enacted in pantomime as they look at the picture.*)

GIRL. Oh, let's turn over. I don't like to see where he eats the grandmother. (*She turns the page.*) Here is Cinderella dancing with the Prince.

(*Enter* CINDERELLA *and the* PRINCE *who do a court dance.*)

LITTLE GIRL. I'm going to take this Mother Goose Book. Oh, look at this picture!

(*Enter* MOTHER GOOSE CHORUS, *dressed like characters in the book.*)

MOTHER GOOSE SONG

We're Mother Goose's Children
You've known us years and years
We're a lot of cunning youngsters
Now don't you think we're dears?

Here's Mistress Mary, Jack and Jill,
And Old King Cole with fiddlers three,
Here's Jack Be Nimble, Bo Peep, Boy Blue,
Miss Muffet and the Miller of the Dee

Chorus

We're just a pleasant memory
Who claimed you long ago
When mother held you on her knees
And rocked you to and fro
She read you tales of Jack's beanstock
And Aladdin and his care
Jack Horner's pie, the Queen's rich tarts
That were stolen by the knave.

(*Enter the* GIRL *who took out the book "Alice in Wonderland" at the same time a large book is pushed on the left side of the stage with the words "Alice in Wonderland" on the side.*)

LITTLE GIRL. I am returning my book. My mother read it to me this afternoon.

LIBRARIAN. Did you like the story?

LITTLE GIRL. Oh, yes! and I like this part best.

(*She turns the pages and shows the* LIBRARIAN *and at the same time the* MAD HATTER, MARCH HARE *and the* DORMOUSE *enter carrying a table and enact the tea scene.* ALICE *enters and takes part. The* MARCH HARE, HATTER, *and* DORMOUSE *are crowded at one end of a table.* ALICE *approaches the table.*)

MARCH HARE AND HATTER. No room! No room!

ALICE. There's plenty of room! (*She sits in a large armchair at one end of the table.*) I don't know who you are.

MARCH HARE. I am the March Hare, that's the Hatter, and this is the Dormouse. Have some wine?

ALICE. I don't see any wine.

MARCH HARE. There isn't any.

ALICE. Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it.

MARCH HARE. It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited.

ALICE. I didn't know it was your table; it's laid for a great many more than three.

HATTER. Your hair wants cutting.

ALICE. You should learn not to make personal remarks; it's very rude.

HATTER. Why is a rave like a writing-desk?

ALICE. Come, we shall have some fun now. I'm glad you've begun asking riddles—I believe I can guess that.

MARCH HARE. So you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?

ALICE. Exactly so.

MARCH HARE. Then you should say what you mean.

ALICE. I do; at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know.

HATTER. Not the same thing a bit. Why, you might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see."

MARCH HARE. You might just as well say that "I like what I get" is the same thing as "I get what I like."

DORMOUSE. You might just as well say that "I breathe when I sleep" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe."

HATTER. It is the same thing with you. (*Takes out his watch, looks at it uneasily, shakes it, holds it to his ear.*) What day of the month is it?

ALICE. The fourth.

HATTER. Two days wrong. I told you butter wouldn't suit the works.

MARCH HARE. It was the best butter.

HATTER. Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well; you shouldn't have put it in with the bread-knife—(MARCH HARE *takes the watch, looks at it gloomily, dips it into his cup of tea, and looks at it again, but doesn't know what else to say.*) It was the best butter, you know.

ALICE. What a funny watch. It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock is it.

HATTER. Why should it? Does your watch tell you what year it is?

ALICE. Of course not, but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together.

HATTER. Which is just the case with mine.

ALICE. I don't quite understand you. What you said had no sort of meaning in it and yet it was certainly English.

HATTER. (*Pouring some hot tea on the* DORMOUSE'S *nose.*) The Dormouse is asleep again.

DORMOUSE. Of course, of course, just what I was going to remark myself.

HATTER. Have you guessed the riddle yet?

ALICE. No, I give up—what's the answer?

HATTER. I haven't the slightest idea.

MARCH HARE. Nor I.

ALICE. I think you might do something better with the time than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers.

HATTER. If you knew Time as well as I do, you wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's him.

ALICE. I don't know what you mean.

HATTER. Of course you don't. I dare say you never even spoke to Time.

ALICE. Perhaps not, but I know I have to beat time when I learn music.

HATTER. Ah, that accounts for it. He won't stand beating. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock. For instance, sup-

pose it were nine o'clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons. You'd only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling! Half past one, time for dinner.

MARCH HARE. I only wish it was.

ALICE. That would be grand, certainly, but then—I shouldn't be hungry for it, you know.

HATTER. Not at first, perhaps, but you could keep it to half past one as long as you liked.

ALICE. Is that the way you manage?

HATTER. Not I—we quarreled last March—just before he went mad, you know. It was at the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing—"Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! How I wonder what you're at!"—You know the song, perhaps.

ALICE. I've heard something like it.

DORMOUSE. Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle—

HATTER. Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse when the Queen bawled out, "He's murdering the time! Off with his head!"

ALICE. How dreadfully savage!

HATTER. And ever since that, he won't do a thing I ask! It's always six o'clock now.

ALICE. Is that the reason so many tea-things are put out here?

HATTER. Yes, that's it; it's always tea time, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles.

ALICE. Then you keep moving around, I suppose?

HATTER. Exactly so, as the things get used up.

ALICE. But when you come to the beginning again?

MARCH HARE. Suppose we change the subject. I vote the young lady tells us a story.

ALICE. I'm afraid I don't know one.

MARCH HARE AND HATTER. Then the Dormouse shall.

Wake up, Dormouse.

(*They pinch him on both sides at once.*)

DORMOUSE. (*Opens his eyes slowly and says, in a hoarse, feeble voice.*) I wasn't asleep; I heard every word you fellows were saying.

MARCH HARE. Tell us a story.

ALICE. Yes, please do!

HATTER. And be quick about it, or you'll be asleep again before it's done.

DORMOUSE. Once upon a time there were three little sisters, and their names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie, and they lived at the bottom of a well—

ALICE. What did they live on?

DORMOUSE. They lived on treacle.

ALICE. They couldn't have done that, you know—they'd have been ill.

DORMOUSE. So they were, very ill.

ALICE. But why did they live at the bottom of a well?

MARCH HARE. Take some more tea.

ALICE. I've had nothing yet, so I can't take more.

HATTER. You mean, you can't take less; it's very easy to take more than nothing.

ALICE. Nobody asked your opinion.

HATTER. Who's making personal remarks now?

ALICE. (*Helps herself to tea and bread and butter.*) Why did they live at the bottom of a well?

DORMOUSE. (*Takes a minute or two to think.*) It was a treacle-well.

ALICE. There's no such a thing!

HATTER AND MARCH HARE. Sh! Sh!

DORMOUSE. If you can't be civil, you'd better finish the story for yourself.

ALICE. (*Very humbly.*) No, please go on. I won't interrupt you again. I dare say there may be one.

DORMOUSE. One, indeed! And so these three little sisters—they were learning to draw, you know—

ALICE. What did they draw?

DORMOUSE. Treacle.

HATTER. I want a clean cup. Let's all move one place on.

(HATTER *moves on,* DORMOUSE *takes his place,* MARCH HARE *takes* DORMOUSE'S *place and* ALICE *unwillingly takes* MARCH HARE'S *place.*)

ALICE. I'm worse off than I was before. You've upset the milk jug into your plate.

MARCH HARE. It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited.

ALICE. Where did they draw the treacle from?

HATTER. You can draw water out of a water-well, so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well—eh? stupid?

ALICE. But they were in the well.

DORMOUSE. Of course they were—well in. They were learning to draw, and they drew all manner of things—everything that begins with an M—

ALICE. Why with an M?

MARCH HARE. Why not?

(ALICE *is silent and confused.* HATTER *pinches* DORMOUSE *to wake him up.*)

DORMOUSE. (*Wakes up with a little shriek and continues.*) —that begins with an M, such as mouse-traps and the moon and memory and muchness—you know you say things are "much of a muchness"—did you ever see such a thing as a drawing of a muchness?

HATTER. Did you?

ALICE. Really, now you ask me, I don't think—

HATTER. Then you shouldn't talk.

MARCH HARE. No!

ALICE. (*Rises and walks away.*) You are very rude. It's the stupidest tea party I ever was at in all my life—

(*Enters the little* GIRL *who took out the book "Alice in Wonderland." At the same time a large book is pushed on the left side of the stage with the words "Alice in Wonderland" on the side.*)

(*Enter* RABBIT *and looks at the scene.*)

RABBIT. (*Seeing* ALICE.) Where did you find this chapter from our book?

ALICE. Right here. It fell out. See, someone brought the book back, now we can go home. (*She puts out her hand to lead him in.*)

RABBIT. (*Getting practical.*) Let's get our pay first.

ALICE. Oh, yes! We mustn't forget that. (*They go hand in hand to the desk.*)

ALICE. Our home has returned, now, so we want our pay.

LIBRARIAN. I'm sorry you must go, you have been good workers. Here, Alice, is your pay. One lollipop according to our agreement. (ALICE *curtsies as she takes it.*) And Master Rabbit one carrot. (*He makes a courtly bow as he receives the carrot.*) And I hope you will return again to Bookland some day.

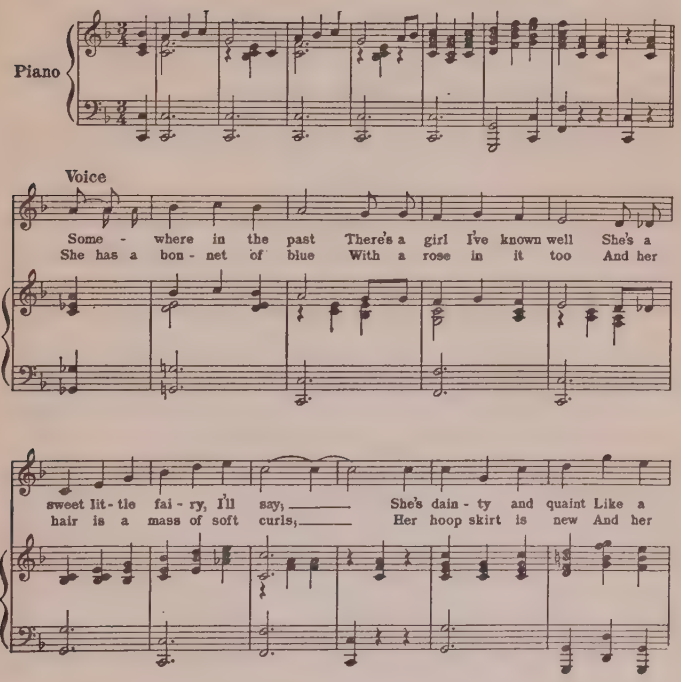
(ALICE *and* RABBIT *come down to footlights and recite the epilogue to the audience*):

Dear friends we hope you've liked our play,
And that you'll go to Bookland, too, some day
We really think you'll find it jolly fun
To pass the time when all your work is done,
To choose a book from off these handy shelves,
And sit with folks like us and rest yourselves,
You'll meet the finest folks you've ever known,
With them as friends you'll never be alone.

They'll show you of themselves, the very best
Don't turn them down, their pages you know we mean
Nor break their backs, poor things, as some have been
Nor leave them in the rain, they're human, too
And like us all they like their covers new.
So now we leave you, friends, with kind good night
And enter in our home, quite out of sight.

(*They slowly back toward the book counter, and close the covers as the curtain falls.*)

Old Fashioned Girl Of My Dreams

Maude Stuart Beagle — Katharine Conley Smith

Piano
Voice
Some - where in the past There's a girl I've known well She's a
She has a bon - net of blue With a rose in it too And her
sweet lit - tle fai - ry, I'll say; She's dain - ty and quaint Like a
hair is a mass of soft curls; Her hoop skirt is new And her

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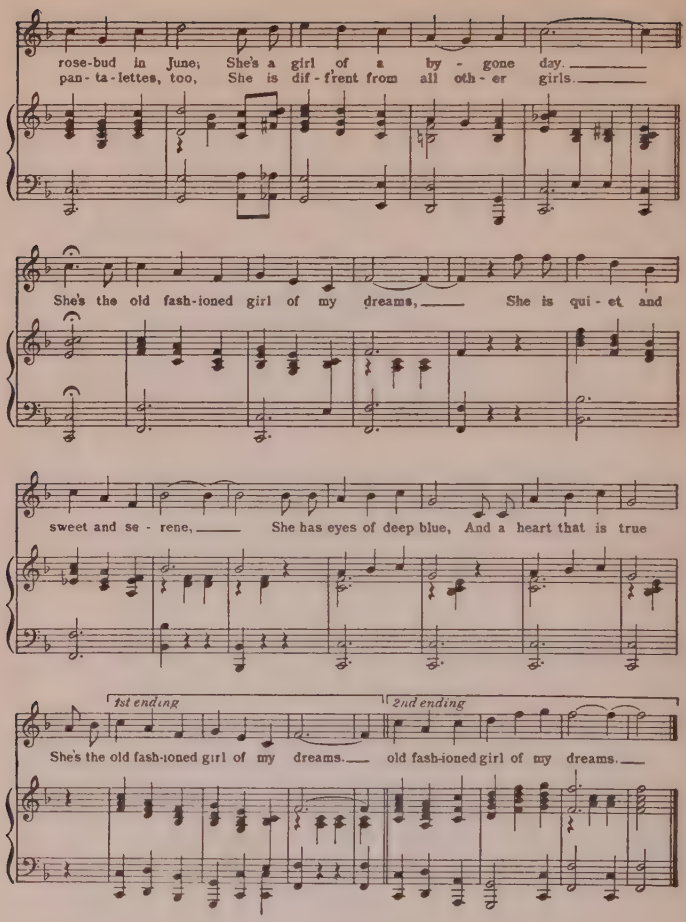
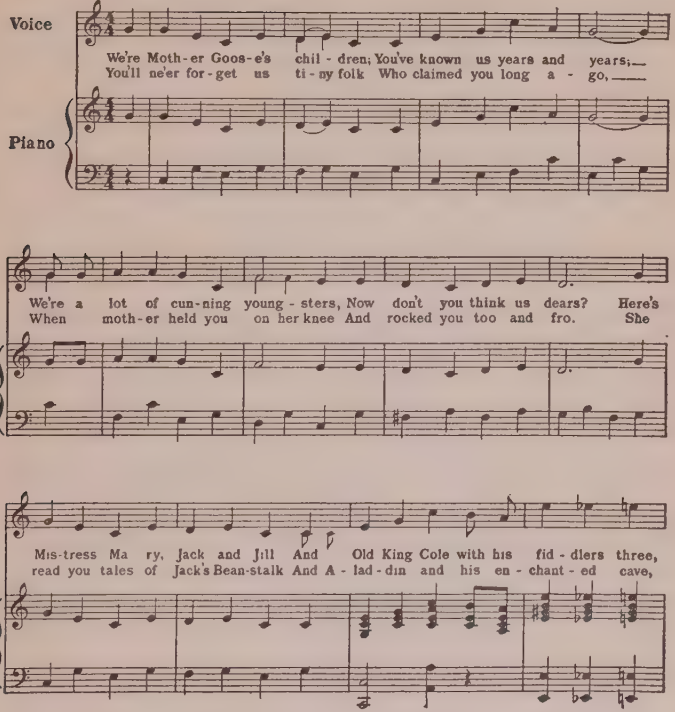

rose-bud in June; She's a girl of a by - gone day.
pan-ta-lettes, too, She is dif-frent from all oth-er girls.
She's the old fash-ioned girl of my dreams, She is qui-et and
sweet and se - rene, She has eyes of deep blue, And a heart that is true
1st ending
2nd ending
She's the old fash-ioned girl of my dreams. old fash-ioned girl of my dreams.

Mother Goose's Children

Maude Stuart Beagle

Katharine Conley Smith


Voice
Piano
We're Moth-er Goos-e's chil - dren; You've known us years and years;—
You'll ne'er for-get us ti - ny folk Who claimed you long a - go,——
We're a lot of cun-ning young - sters, Now don't you think us dears? Here's
When moth-er held you on her knee And rocked you too and fro. She
Mis-tress Ma ry, Jack and Jill And Old King Cole with his fid - dlers three,
read you tales of Jack's Bean-stalk And A - lad - din and his en - chant - ed cave,

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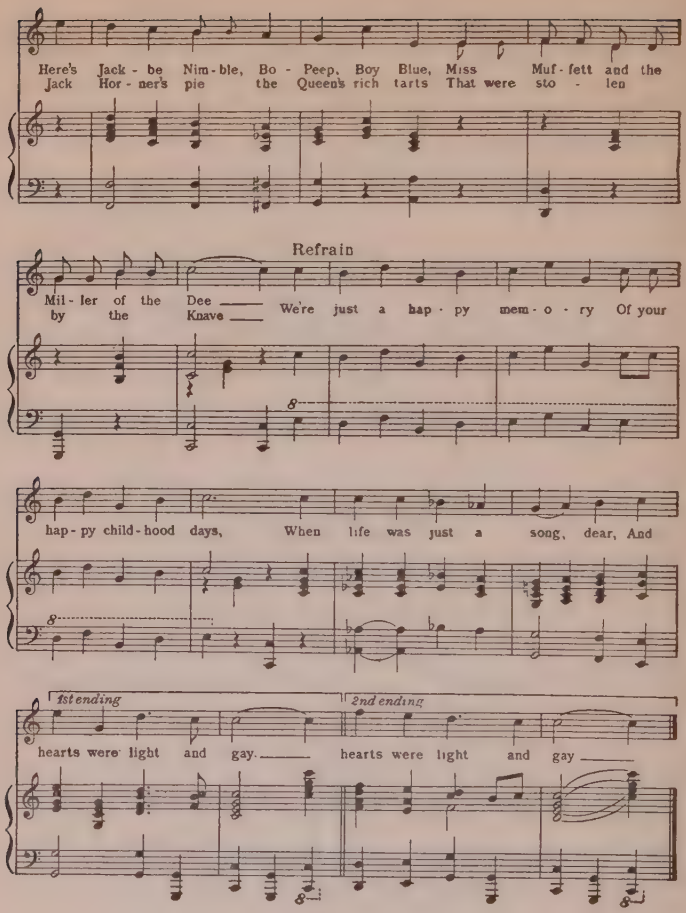
Here's Jack - be Nim - ble, Bo - Peep, Boy Blue, Miss Muf - fett and the
Jack Hor - ner's pie the Queen's rich tarts That were sto - len
Refrain
Mil - ler of the Dee ___ We're just a hap - py mem - o - ry Of your
by the Knave ___
hap - py child - hood days, When life was just a song, dear, And
1st ending
2nd ending
hearts were light and gay. ___ hearts were light and gay ___

A BOY'S DAD[1]

By

JERRY B. EMERSON

[1] Included by courtesy of the author. A fee of $5.00 for the production of this play must be paid to Jerry B. Emerson, 471 Hawthorne Lane, Winnetka, Ill.

CHARACTERS

ALLAN RICHARDS
ELMER
DAN RICHARDS
HARRIS

A BOY'S DAD

The scene is the rear of the ALLAN RICHARDS *Grocery store. There are a desk and a couple of chairs. A hatrack stands in one corner. In the rear is a window and to the right a swinging door leading to the grocery proper. It is one o'clock.* ALLAN *enters through the door at right, hangs up his hat. He is about thirty-eight years old. A little above average height, slender, and walks with a slight limp. Calls back over his shoulder.*

RICHARDS. You can go now, Elmer, if you want to.

ELMER. (*Calling from other room.*) O, I'm not goin' home this noon, Allan. Mary's gone over to Fairfield, I ate some crackers and cheese.

ALLAN. (*Looks over some papers on the desk.*) Been busy?

ELMER. (*Enters eating apple. Carries another. He is a spry old fellow.*) No more'n usual at dinner-time.

ALLAN. Let's hope everyone is eating a lot. Give me one.

ELMER. (*Tosses him the other apple.* ALLAN *sits on corner of desk, eating it.*) Never see the Higgins make a bushel of potatoes last so long as they have this one. She's started makin' her own soap again, too.

ALLAN. It's a good thing we aren't in the undertaking business, Elmer.

ELMER. How come?

ALLAN. You'd be following all our prospects with a tape measure.

ELMER. Business is business. Thought mebbe your boy'd be down with you this afternoon.

ALLAN. He may be down later.

ELMER. Folks hereabouts was all surprised as could be when he came to town last week. Dunno's anyone suspected you was ever married.

ALLAN. Yes, I was married.

ELMER. Hadn't seen the boy in some time, had you?

ALLAN. Not since I came here.

ELMER. Ten years. Well, you two was purt' near strangers, wasn't you?

ALLAN. Strangers, yes.

ELMER. Where's he been all these years?

ALLAN. With his mother—and her husband.

ELMER. Mhmm. Peculiar little chap. Don't quite make him out myself.

ALLAN. He's a city boy, Elmer.

ELMER. Seems like he don't take interest in anything.

ALLAN. I suppose he's homesick.

ELMER. If he'd let folks make up to him he'd forget about bein' homesick. Seems like he's standoffish even with you.

ALLAN. Give him time, Elmer. He hasn't seen me since I came back from the war and he was only five years old then. I think I'd be suspicious myself if I were in his place.

ELMER. Dunno what he'd want to be suspicious of you for.

ALLAN. Well, people might have prejudiced him against me.

ELMER. You mean his mother?

ALLAN. I don't mean anyone. (*Picks up brief case.*) What's this?

ELMER. That's Harris the Hart cash register man's. 'Most forget to tell you he was in. Said he'd be back after he'd had some dinner.

ALLAN. Yes? Well, I'm sorry to have to disappoint him again but I told him last year I wouldn't be interested for a couple of years more.

ELMER. (*Disappointed.*) It ain't as if we didn't need it.

ALLAN. I know we're away behind the times but it can't be helped.

ELMER. I snum, Allan, I dunno how you've built up this trade like you have. Folks like a nice, bright store with shiny doo-dads. So, I guess it's just you. We need a new sign, too. Bailey's name has been up over our door ever since you bought him out ten years ago.

ALLAN. I know it, Elmer. It's been a sore spot with you all this time. Well, I'll see about a sign today. I'll let Ed pay off his bill that way.

ELMER. Good. Then, if you get in a new set of scales and—

ALLAN. Hey, there, not so fast. I'll just wait 'till I can pay for 'em. No more debt for me.

ELMER. Good gosh, you can't expect to keep out of debt in business. Do business on the other man's money. That's the modern way.

ALLAN. O, yes. And it's fine for the chaps that don't worry. I guess I'm not really a good business man, Elmer. You couldn't guess at the nights I've lain awake, scheming how to pay off the debt on this store. Well, that's all past. Elmer, I'm going to be the happiest man in the world the first of the month. You know why?

ELMER. Dunno's I do.

ALLAN. I'm going to send Ted Griffin my last check for $685.

ELMER. You mean that's the last installment on your loan?

ALLAN. The very last. The mill-stone is about to drop from my neck. Think of it, Elmer. Out of debt. Free.

ELMER. But, Allan, if you've got the store all paid off now's the time to go ahead and put in some new equipment.

ALLAN. (*Stops and looks at him fixedly.*) No, Elmer, you don't understand. I want the new fixtures as badly

as any man ever wanted them but, by George, I'm going to wait until I can put the money down and say "There you are."

ELMER. (*Shakes his head sadly.*) It's agin all the laws of business.

ALLAN. (*Paces up and down, limpingly.*) Maybe so. But business isn't everything. There's health and peace of mind and O, well, we have to live and to live we have to work, not always at the thing we would choose but we don't have to make ourselves slaves for anything more than a living unless we want to. And I don't want to.

ELMER. You ain't progressive.

ALLAN. No, I'm not progressive. I'm just tired. Just tired.

(*He sits heavily.*)

ELMER. You hadn't ought to try to take care o' the trade none. Why don't you take things easier? You know what Doc said about that bum leg o' yours.

ALLAN. (*Surveys it ruefully.*) Yes, but it's not that so much. It's my mind that's tired. Fifteen years ago I'd have waded into debt up to my neck and never lost a night's sleep. I guess I'm getting old. My nerves are all shot.

ELMER. Old? No, 'taint that. It's that dummed war fixed you.

ALLAN. It knocked me up all right and I was pretty blue for a time there when I couldn't get a job afterward but I've been pretty lucky after all. I had a good friend who loaned me enough money to take over this store and everything's turned out great. I've had quiet and peace and real friendship. And now I've got my boy. And best of all I'm free now to enjoy it all. (*Walks to window and looks out.*) No more debt. No more worry. Boy, look at those trees out there. Days like this I'm going to walk out if I want to.

Lord, Elmer, the sky and the trees and the sun will always be here but I won't always be here to enjoy them.

ELMER. (*On whom all this is lost.*) No use worryin' over business debts. Nobody does. You got to owe money to make money. Folks'll think they won't nobody trust you.

ALLAN. I hope nobody will if I'm ever fool enough to ask 'em to. But I'm not. Because I know if I did I'd pay for it ten times over in ways besides money.

ELMER. But why? I don't see—

ALLAN. Because I'm just made that way. Well, I guess I'd better get these bills made out. (*Sits at desk.*)

ELMER. (*Starts out.*) Here comes Dan now.

ALLAN. (*Rises.*) Good. I hoped he'd come down. (DAN *enters. He is a slight young fellow, about fifteen years old. He is very shy and therefore tries to conceal his shyness under an exterior of gruffness.*) Well, well. Hello, there. Wondered if you were coming down. Good kid.

DAN. Thought I'd go to a movie, Allan.

ELMER. Movie? You didn't think we had movies here afternoons, did you?

DAN. Why, what do people do afternoons?

ELMER. Do? Why, why—

ALLAN. People do differently in the city, Elmer.

DAN. (*Defensively.*) My mother goes to the movies every afternoon.

ALLAN. O, well, we'll go to the movies tonight, Dan.

ELMER. Here comes Mrs. Bisbee for her loaf of whole wheat. (*He disappears through door.*)

ALLAN. Dan, I'm afraid you're going to find it hard here at first. It's quite different from the city, I know.

DAN. Say, how long've I got to stay here, Allan? Do you know?

ALLAN. Got to? Well, Dan, I don't know. You know,

things haven't broken just right for your mother's husband.

DAN. Jud? O, yeah, he lost on the stock market. (*Excitedly.*) Say, that's some game.

ALLAN. Well, anyway, you're here now. I don't know for how long but I hope to stay.

DAN. To stay?

ALLAN. And the point is—well—I can't send you back to the same school they did.

DAN. Why, what am I going to do this fall?

ALLAN. Wouldn't you like to go to school here?

DAN. Here? In this hole?

ALLAN. I'm afraid that's all I can do. You see, I haven't a lot of money. In fact, I'm only just getting a good start.

DAN. You're not going to send me back to school?

ALLAN. Gee, Dan, I wish I could. But things aren't always going to be this way. I'm getting along fine. Maybe next year—

(*There is a little silence. Then* DAN *bursts out impulsively.*)

DAN. Mother always said you were a poor stick!

(ALLAN *goes very tense. He says nothing for a moment. Then he leans over and jerks up his trouser leg. Points to scar.*)

ALLAN. Do you see that scar? Part of the bone was carried away. I've fought off tuberculosis in it and won, but how do you suppose it felt to walk on that, day after day, looking and looking for a job? No, no, I'm sorry Dan. Perhaps I was a poor stick. I couldn't support her and you. She has a right to think what she likes. But can't you try and forget whatever she has said? I'm not so bad. (*Smiles suddenly.*) And I want a chance to make you like me. I was so glad to have you come. We ought to have some great times together. What do you like to do most?

DAN. Well, I like the movies.

ALLAN. Of course.

DAN. And I like to read.

ALLAN. Good. I like to read, too. And we'll have lots of time for that this winter. Do you like to play ball? Football?

DAN. (*Cautiously.*) Well, I don't know.

ALLAN. Haven't you ever played?

DAN. O, I've watched it. It looks like fun. But just the fellows that are good at it get a chance at school.

ALLAN. There's a vacant lot near the house where all the boys play. You'll have to go over. I'd like you to get big and strong.

(DAN *who has been fingering a glass jar drops it. It breaks with a crash.* ALLAN, *startled, springs to his feet.* DAN *ducks suddenly as though to ward off a blow. Horrified,* ALLAN *grasps his arm.*)

ALLAN. Look here! What do you mean by doing that?

DAN. (*Stammering.*) I'm sorry. I didn't mean to drop it.

ALLAN. Dan, boy, I didn't mean that. What does the old jar of pickles matter? I mean, why did you duck just now as though you expected me to strike you? Did you think I actually would?

DAN. I—didn't know.

ALLAN. (*Sits and says quietly.*) I didn't mean to roar at you, Dan. Forget it, please. It's my silly nerves make me jump like that. But to have you— Dan, tell me a little about Jud, will you? You know, I've never seen him.

DAN. (*Sullenly.*) There's nothing to tell.

ALLAN. Is he as tall as I am?

DAN. About the same.

ALLAN. Pretty strong, is he?

DAN. Strong? I'll say he is! Why, Allan— (*Catches himself.*)

ALLAN. Yes?

DAN. O, nothing.

ALLAN. Dan, couldn't you—just as well—call me Dad? I'd like that.

DAN. Well, mother always called you Allan when she was telling us about you.

ALLAN. She—told you quite a bit about me?

DAN. (*Shrugs.*) Oh!

(ELMER *enters.*)

ELMER. Allan, someone's got to go over to Fairfield to the ware-house.

ALLAN. That's so. Well, I'll go now.

ELMER. Gosh, what's this? (*Gets broom and starts to sweep up.*)

ALLAN. Want to go along, Dan? Nice ride on the bus.

DAN (*Mumbles.*) No, guess not.

ALLAN. (*Shakes his head helplessly.*) Well, I'll be on my way.

ELMER. Don't forget you promised to get a new sign, Allan. Might's well get it ordered.

ALLAN. I'll do that before I go, Elmer. What shall I have it say?

ELMER. (*Stops sweeping and ponders.*) The Gainesville Emporium. Fancy and Staple Groceries. How's that?

ALLAN. (*Laughs.*) I'm afraid that would be too hard to live up to. I think I'd prefer just plain "Richards Grocer."

ELMER. No class to that.

ALLAN. Or—wait—I have it. Allan Richards and Son. How does that sound Dan?

DAN. I don't know what you mean.

ELMER. Jumpin' snakes. He means a partnership, boy.

ALLAN. Want to go into partnership with your Dad, Dan?

DAN. (*Embarrassed.*) I don't know anything about stores.

ALLAN. But you'll learn. Say, that was a bully idea I had. I need some young blood in here. It gives me pep just to think of it. We're going to do great things together. How about it, Dan? Is it a go?

DAN. Aw, I don't know.

ALLAN. Well, you don't mind if I get the sign made up that way, do you?

DAN. Aw, I don't care, if you want to.

ALLAN. Well, I do. I'm going to give Ed the order to paint it right now. So long. See you about five, Dan. (*He goes.*)

ELMER. There's a man. They don't come like him every day. (DAN *says nothing, but walks over to window.*) What's a matter, don't you like your Dad?

DAN. Well, he doesn't like me, does he? Mother said he'd be sore 'cause he had to support me for awhile. And I guess he is. Tellin' me how hard up he is.

ELMER. Pshaw. He's been too lonesome like these years not to be glad to have you.

DAN. He thinks I'm a sissy.

ELMER. Sissy?

DAN. He didn't say it right out but I know what he thinks. If he says anything more I'll—I'll beat it.

ELMER. Beat it? Where?

DAN. I don't know. Gee, it's lonesome around this burg.

ELMER. You'll be all right after you've been here awhile. You're homesick.

DAN. (*Dashes his hand across his eyes and turns. Laughs scornfully.*) Homesick? Think I'm a baby?

ELMER. Dunno's it's babyish to get homesick. I been that way. Say, boy, you just forget that runnin-away business.

Why, your Dad's been needin' you for ten years. Only thing he's sorry about is he didn't have you sooner.

DAN. (*Turns quickly.*) He tell you so?

ELMER. Well, ain't he told you so?

DAN. Yes, but that don't count. Lots of people say things to you they don't mean.

ELMER. Didn't he make you a partner?

DAN. Well, lots of people promise you things they know they never mean, too. I know. He just said that. He didn't really mean it.

ELMER. Say, lemme tell you this. You don't know your Dad. If he says a thing is so it's so. They ain't a man in town wouldn't believe him quicker'n they would themselves. Yes, sir. If he says you're a partner, you can just start takin' half the profits right now. That's how good his word is.

DAN. Gee!

ELMER. Why, he's so darn honest he makes me mad.

(HARRIS, *a brisk young salesman enters.*)

HARRIS. Hello, I thought, at first, there was no one here.

ELMER. Gosh, Mr. Harris, I didn't hear you come in.

HARRIS. Richards got back yet?

ELMER. Got back and gone.

HARRIS. Gone? For long?

ELMER. 'Fraid so. He went over to Fairfield to the warehouse. (HARRIS *looks curiously at* DAN.) This is Dan Richards, Mr. Harris.

HARRIS. Well, well. I didn't know Richards had a son. (*Shakes hands with* DAN.)

ELMER. Sure, why, he's in the business now.

HARRIS. In the business? You don't mean it.

ELMER. Too bad Mr. Harris didn't come next week so he could see our new sign, eh, Dan? Allan Richards and Son.

HARRIS. Well, that's great.

ELMER. There's Minnie Webb. Canned goods day. (*He goes.*)

HARRIS. Haven't seen you around before. Where you from?

DAN. I'm from Chicago.

HARRIS. Chicago, eh? Now, you ought to be able to give your Dad some new ideas. Fresh from the city.

DAN. O, sure, I've got lots of good ideas soon's I get around to it.

HARRIS. That's the idea. You've got to be progressive to be in business these days.

DAN. Yes. I'll make lots of changes around here.

HARRIS. You're going to sort of manage things, I see.

DAN. Well, I just started to kind of run things this week.

HARRIS. We've often spoken of that old money drawer you've got out there. That's an old relic. Cash register's the only thing to have.

DAN. O, yes, I'm going to buy one of those too.

HARRIS. Why, say, you're the man I want to talk with, then.

DAN. No?

HARRIS. It's a pleasure to meet a fellow with progressive ideas like yours. You're going to make a success of this business, I see that.

DAN. I guess Allan needed me, all right.

HARRIS. I came in from Hartford this morning. Had a special deal I knew Mr. Richards would be interested in. We just took in a cash register and book-keeping machine over there that's been out only three months. Fellow that had bought it went bankrupt. Couldn't meet his payments.

DAN. Gee, that was tough.

HARRIS. 'Course, I thought of Richards right away because he needs one here. And this book-keeping system is

just the thing he wanted last year when I was in but I told him to wait until I had a good buy for him. And say, I have now.

DAN. (*Politely.*) Is that so?

HARRIS. This machine sells, new, for $1200. And I can give him this one, just as good as new, for $600. Here's a picture of it. Isn't that a beauty? And for only half the price!

DAN. (*Looks at it bewilderedly.*) Fine looking machine, all right.

HARRIS. You can see it's a complete book-keeping outfit as well as cash register. Ever see an outfit as complete as that?

DAN. No, guess not.

HARRIS. Now the only difficulty is, I've got to leave here at 3:10. As soon as I show it to George Waite over in Crawford he's going to snap it up right away. I hate to have Richards lose the first chance at it. (*Sighs regretfully as he starts to put photographs away.*)

DAN. Gee, can't you wait over until tomorrow? He'll be back this afternoon.

HARRIS. Wish I could. But I've an appointment this afternoon in Crawford. Too bad. It's just what your Dad wanted. He'll be disappointed.

DAN. He sure will.

HARRIS. Hold on. I forgot you were a partner. What do you think of that? You can O.K. this order, of course. (*Gets out contract and starts writing.*) I'll just fill this out and you can put the new firm name under it and sign below that.

DAN. Well, I'd have to talk that over with Allan.

HARRIS. Oh, sure. You talk it over with him. That's all right. This will just hold it for you. I'll go over to Crawford and be back in the morning. Richards will be here

then and he can sign it, then, to bind the contract. You just put your name here now, temporarily.

DAN. Well, I'd rather wait.

HARRIS. (*Laughs.*) Wait. What for?

DAN. Maybe Allan won't want it.

HARRIS. Won't want it? Why, boy, he'll be tickled to death that you used your authority to hold it for him. There isn't a chance he won't want it. Not a chance.

DAN. Well—

HARRIS. And it doesn't mean anything, anyway, until his signature goes on, but it will tomorrow. Just sign here.

DAN. Here?

HARRIS. That's right. (DAN *signs.*) Good, that's business. $600 for a machine like that. That's what I call a bargain.

(ELMER *bustles in.*)

ELMER. Dan, you seen anything of Mrs. Hall's powder case? She left it here yesterday.

DAN. I haven't seen it.

ELMER. (*Rummaging about.*) I knew I put it in a good place but doggoned if I remember where. O, yes, here 'tis in my rubber.

DAN. Say, Mr. Harris, you—you wouldn't hold me to that if—

HARRIS. Now, don't you worry. Your father's going to—

ELMER. (*Going out.*) Hi, there! Forget somep'n, Allan?

ALLAN. (*Outside.*) Missed my bus. Have to wait 'til tomorrow. (*Enters.*) Well, Dan, the sign's ordered. Hello, Harris.

HARRIS. Thought I'd missed you. I understood you'd gone to Fairfield.

ALLAN. I was in talking with Ed Bennett about a new sign and forgot all about the bus. By the way, have you met my new partner, Harris? This is my son, Dan.

HARRIS. O, your son and I are old friends now. We've been having a very interesting talk.

(*Somewhat embarrassed,* DAN *walks over to the window.*)

ALLAN. That's fine.

HARRIS. How's business, Richards?

ALLAN. Just about the same as usual. We're getting along.

HARRIS. Good! Well, Richards, I've just been telling your young partner about a machine I've been saving for you.

ALLAN. Yes, Elmer told me you were in this morning to see me. I appreciate your interest and all that but as I remember I told you last year that we wouldn't be a prospect for you for a couple of years yet.

(DAN *turns quickly and looks from one to the other.*)

HARRIS. Well, you've had a good year from all I've heard. Sometimes one good year—

ALLAN. It's no use, Harris. I don't want to take your time and I'll just tell you frankly that this year I wouldn't consider—

HARRIS. Now, Richards, this isn't a new machine I'm trying to sell you, although it's exactly as good as new. It's a trade-in and you can have it for exactly $600 cash. And you know it's a $1200 machine.

ALLAN. I haven't got it, Harris.

HARRIS. You haven't got $600? O, come.

ALLAN. Well, I shouldn't have said exactly that, I have got it. I've $750 to be exact. But $685 of it isn't really mine.

HARRIS. Not yours?

ALLAN. It's going to pay off the last installment on my loan on this store. I was afraid for a time I wasn't going to make it. It's taken some figuring. But It's there. And there's a load off my mind. I'd like to have a cash register and a filing system and new scales and a dozen things but first of all, Harris, I wanted to be sure of my store. And I

am now. Come back next year, or, better still, the year after. By that time, maybe—

HARRIS. But couldn't you extend your loan awhile longer?

ALLAN. Yes, I could do that. But I want to get out of the hole. I want to get my head above water. I've been in debt ten years. When I pay that note Friday I shall feel like a man coming out of prison.

HARRIS. But why are you so opposed to being a little in debt? Why, Richards, with the right kind of layout here you could have every customer in town and for twelve miles out. They all like you. It's just your shabby store—

ALLAN. Just a minute, I've had a spear at my back, driving me, driving me, every waking hour of my life since I took on that debt. When I started out I did everything alone. I'm stronger now but it was more than I should have done just then. But I had to do it. I couldn't lay down. I couldn't fail. I had an obligation to meet every six months. Well, it's over now. It was a fight but I made the grade. But I'm telling you Harris, I wouldn't take that spear and put it at my back again for any promise of wealth you could make me.

HARRIS. (*Slowly draws contract out of his pocket. Smiles faintly.*) In that case—

ALLAN. I'm sorry, Harris, but it's no use. Don't bring out any blank contracts.

HARRIS. Well, Richards, this isn't a blank contract.

(DAN *is alarmed.*)

ALLAN. What do you mean?

HARRIS. (*Walks over to* DAN *and hands contract to him.*) Tear it up, kid.

ALLAN. Here! What's that?

DAN. Aw.

HARRIS. It doesn't matter, anyway. I was only killing

time. Got a big kick out of it.

ALLAN. Is that a contract, Dan?

DAN. (*Eagerly.*) He told me it wouldn't count if you didn't O.K. it.

ALLAN. Do you mean you've signed it?

HARRIS. Don't get sore about it, Richards. He's just a kid.

ALLAN. (*Takes contract and examines it.*) You think this proposition of Mr. Harris' is good, do you, Dan?

DAN. (*Chokes.*) He said it didn't mean anything without your signature. I wouldn't 've done it. Honest. Except for that.

ALLAN. (*Turns cheerfully to* HARRIS.) Well, Harris, I guess you've sold us something. Got your pen there?

HARRIS. Oh, say, now. I didn't want to railroad you into something.

ALLAN. Here, I guess I've got a pen. (*Takes out his pen and signs. Takes out check book.*) Cash with order?

DAN. Aw, say, Allan.

HARRIS. Let it go, Richards. I wouldn't hold you to that if I could.

ALLAN. (*Writes check.*) If my partner wants it so do I. His signature's as good as mine.

DAN. But he said you didn't have to, Allan.

HARRIS. (*Shakes hands with both.*) You're a good sport, Richards. I'll remember this. (*Puts away check and contract.*)

ALLAN. See you around next year, I suppose.

HARRIS. Right. Goodbye. I've got to get that 3:10.

ALLAN. Goodbye. (*He goes. Carelessly,* ALLAN *takes out his pipe and lights it.*) A man's signature's about the most important thing he owns, I guess, son.

DAN (*Impulsively.*) I'll work for you. I'll do everything. You can take it out of my pay. I'll make it all up to you. Honest, I will.

ALLAN. Listen, Dan. Don't say anything more about it. I changed my mind about that machine. I think, now, it's the best buy I ever made.

DAN. I'll never sign another paper as long as I live!

ALLAN. (*Quietly.*) Why, sure you will. We'll sign together, son.

(*His head down,* DAN *walks slowly over to him. Looks up.*)

DAN. Gee—Dad—I think you're great!

(*They grasps each other's hands.*)

CURTAIN

THE LONELY CHILD[1]

(*IN THE REIGN OF ELIZABETH*)

By

DELLE OGLESBEE ROSS

[1] Included by courtesy of the author. A fee of $5.00 for the production of this play must be paid to Miss Delle Oglesbee Ross, 320 N. Michigan St., Plymouth, Ind.

PERSONS

The Lonely Child
The Rich Mother
First Child
Second Child
Third Child
Other Children
The Poor Mother
Hugh
Alys
Little Betty
The Christmas Waits
A Man
A Servant Maid
Two Women

Scene: *An English Village*
Time: *Christmas Eve in the reign of Queen Elizabeth*

ACT I
A street.

ACT II
Interior of a poor home.

THE LONELY CHILD

THE CAROLS SUNG BY THE WAITS

Act I

Children before the Infant Jesus—*C. Jos. Brambach.*	*Opening*
Christians All, throw your shutters wide.	*Old French Carol*
The Waits Song	*Old English*
The First Noël	*Old French*

Act II

Christians All, etc., *is sung again—just a few lines.*	
God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen.	*Old English*
The Holly and the Ivy.	*Old English*

Other carols may be supplemented or substituted.
The Waits should be accompanied, if possible, by a violin.

SETTINGS

The staging of this play may be simply arranged with dark draperies, or elaborated if desired. The exterior of the houses in the street scene can be made of "Brick" crêpe paper, pasted on the back of the interior scenery or large screens, which can be reversed for the second act. Use cotton and mica dust for the snowy roofs, around windows and doors, and on the ground. Place two little evergreens at either side of the front of the stage,

snow flecked. Make the windows of tissue paper pasted on window screen frames, the small panes barred in with manila paper cut into strips. Electric bulbs, covered with red tissue paper, behind these, will give a beautiful glow from the windows into the street.

The interior in the second act is just a bare room. The fire-place, center back, can be made of a box covered with "Brick" paper, and the fire, red tissue paper spirale with electric light bulbs underneath.

COSTUMES

The Characters should be dressed according to the period of Queen Elizabeth. The Rich Mother *and* Children *gaily, with wide ruffs and skirts, the poor family in dark garments, very plain, with close white caps.* The Lonely Child *wears a straight dark smock, and is bare footed.* The Waits *should wear long capes of bright colors, parti-colored hose, and grotesque hats.*

ACT I

A village street. It is quite dark, and the lights from the windows of the houses shine out. The doors are hung with holly wreaths. There is a large house in the center of the stage, and at each side smaller ones. Snow covers the ground and the roofs of the houses. Upon the steps of one huddles a ragged child, asleep. Far off is heard the sound of voices singing a Christmas hymn, "Children before the Infant Jesus." *The music dies away and, for a moment, all is very still.*

Two Women *laden with bundles cross the stage, laughing, and enter one of the houses. Again there is silence. Then in the distance the voices are heard again, grow-*

ing louder, singing a carol, "Christians all throw your shutters wide." *A group of* CHRISTMAS WAITS *enters. Standing before the houses they sing several carols. The laughter of children is heard within the large house. The window is opened and they throw money out.* THE WAITS *gather up the money and go off singing* "Christians all, etc." *The children disappear.*

A MAN *opens the door above* THE LONELY CHILD, *and looks up the street, then noticing* THE CHILD *touches him with his foot.*

THE MAN. What do ye here?

THE LONELY CHILD. (*Sitting up and rubbing his eyes as though confused.*) Oh—

THE MAN. Can't ye speak?

THE CHILD. (*Still confused.*) Methought I heard sweet music, but the streets are as empty and dark as though it were midnight, I must have been dreaming. (*He shivers, blowing on his fingers, then notices the man.*)

THE MAN. Now then, be off with ye!

THE CHILD. (*Rising to his feet.*) Oh—it is so cold and lonely.

THE MAN. Be off—I say. (*Shuts the door,* THE CHILD *starts up the steps, then turns slowly and sees the lights in the other houses.*)

THE CHILD. Surely there are kind people in these warm houses. Surely they would be glad to give a little child like me a welcome on this night. (*He goes timidly to the door of a house and knocks. No one appears and he knocks again.* *A* MAID *opens the door.*)

THE MAID. What want ye?

THE CHILD. Only a tiny place by the fire, and a sip of warm milk.

THE MAID. And dost think we have time to be a-bothering

with beggar children on this night, and the mistress making Yule-tide feast with all her kin-folk? There's no place for ye, with everyone rushing and hurrying, and the mistress that tired and cross there's no pleasing her.

THE CHILD. (*Hopefully.*) I might help a bit.

THE MAID. Get on with ye, now; go home to your mother! The night's no time for ye to be out! (*Shuts the door.*)

THE CHILD. (*Catching hold of the door.*)—Oh— Please.

THE MAID. (*Pushing him off.*) Go on with ye, I say! A beggar brat to be a-bothering! (*She shuts the door, grumbling.* THE CHILD *crouches down with his head on his arm. Afar is heard again* "Christians All." *In the largest house the children laugh and dance past the window, singing* "Merry Christmas, Merry, Merry Christmas." THE CHILD *lifts his head and listens.*)

THE CHILD. How happy they sound. (*He goes to the window and presses his face against it.*) Oh, how warm and bright it is! (*Turns away shivering and rubbing his fingers, then turns back to the window.*) There is a beautiful mother twining the gay holly wreaths, and the father is making ready for the bringing of the Yule log. (*Pauses. Voices of children are heard singing from inside.*) And now the maids are hanging the mistletoe. High—high from the door's arch they hang it—with its soft green leaves and white berries. (*The children crowd to the window, shouting and laughing, and point at* THE CHILD.) They are winding the ropes of green around the big pictures. There is one of a lovely lady—her face is like that of the beautiful mother's. How soft and gentle her eyes are. See there she smiles at *me.* Mayhap—(*The children rush out of doors and come toward* THE CHILD.)

FIRST CHILD. (*Gaily.*) Oh, a beggar child! A beggar child on Christmas Eve!

THE LONELY CHILD. (*Turning toward them.*) Oh, and

it please thee, may I come and play with thee, and warm myself by thy fire?

FIRST CHILD. Play with us, indeed!

THE LONELY CHILD. I am so cold—

THE SECOND CHILD. Listen, the beggar child wants to play with us!

THE THIRD CHILD. As if we'd play with anyone so ragged and dirty! (*Driving* THE LONELY CHILD *before them.*)

ALL. Away! Away with beggars on Christmas Eve!

(THE CHILD *turns with a pitiful little gesture, then runs off the stage, with his arm over his face. The children join hands, singing,* "There were three ships." *They dance a fold dance with much gaiety.* THE MOTHER *comes to the door.*)

THE RICH MOTHER. Come, dear children. Thy good father awaits thee to light the Yule log. Come, then, and put your candle in the window or the Christ Child cannot see to visit us tonight.

(*The children run, pushing and laughing, into the house and the door closes. In the distance are heard again* THE WAITS *singing* "Christians All Ope Your Shutters Wide.")

CURTAIN

ACT II

Interior of a poor cottage home. Fire-place center back with old fashioned musket hanging above it. Window with lighted candle on the sill at right, door left. An old table with knitting piled upon it near the window. A low chair, two stools and a box or chest comprise the rest of the furniture. On the hearth a bowl of milk is warming. The room is lighted by the glow of the

fire and the candle. THE MOTHER *is seated in the low chair with* LITTLE BETTY *on her knee.* ALYS *is kneeling at the fire-place blowing the coals of a meagre fire.*

MOTHER. Our Hugh is very late tonight.

ALYS. (*After a pause.*) It is very cold, Mother dear. When I stand by the window I can make little clouds with my breath.

MOTHER. (*Absently.*) 'Tis cold—cold.

ALYS. I wish my brother would come home while the fire is warm and bright.

MOTHER. Ah, yes, child. It grieveth me much that I must send him out this bitter night.

ALYS. Then why—

MOTHER. But at last the hosen all are finished, and we must e'en have the pennies that my little birds may be fed on the blessed Christmas Day. Is it not so, my wee lass?

LITTLE BETTY. (*Sleepily.*) Yes, dear mother. (*Popping up her head.*) And little cakes all frosted. Thee *did* say so.

MOTHER. Truly, yes, with sugars red and blue, so you shall have them if Hugh but gets the pennies.

(*The children nod happily.*)

MOTHER. Ah, I wish that he were safely home. He is but little to be out so dark a night.

(*Music is heard outside. The voices come nearer singing* "Christians All.")

ALYS. (*Jumping up and running to the window.*) 'Tis the Waits! The Christmas Waits!

(LITTLE BETTY *jumps down from her mother's knee and runs after her.*)

MOTHER. Ah, yes, the Waits! And last year my good man sang with them, caroling as gaily as any.

(THE WAITS *sing outside the window,* "The Holly and the Ivy," "Noël," *etc. The children peer out at them.* THE

MOTHER *sits listening with folded hands. Finally* THE WAITS *move on and the singing dies away in the distance.*)

MOTHER. (*After a pause.*) Come, little maids, 'tis cold by the window. Come, sit thee warm by the fire. Surely our brave lad will be here soon.

(*The children go back to the fire. The door opens with a rush, and a boy enters carrying a large branch, and an armful of holly and mistletoe.*)

MOTHER AND CHILDREN. Hugh! Our Hugh!

HUGH. (*Running to his mother, and dropping three or four coins in her lap.*) There, my mother! Good Master Simeon hath given me one extra 'cause 'tis Christmas Eve. Was that not kind of him?

MOTHER. The good—

HUGH. (*Interrupting.*) And see! See what I have found! (*Holding up the branch.*) 'Twas lying in the street. Doubtless 'twas broken from someone's Yule log.

ALYS AND LITTLE BETTY. (*Rapturously.*) Oh! Oh!

HUGH. See, my sisters, 'twill do finely for us, now we'll e'en light our Yule log with the best of 'em—and see—here's twigs of holly and sweet mistletoe for gay, brave wreaths.

ALYS. Oh, we will twine the wreaths. (*Dancing about.*) Come, Bettykins, come help me lift the Yule log on the hearth.

HUGH. (*As children push and tug at the big branch.*) Now, slowly—slowly—'twill take a stronger hand than thine.

MOTHER. Careful— Careful.

HUGH. First we must scatter and damp the fire, for our Yule must be lighted with proper ceremony.

(*They put out the fire.*)

ALYS. And how shall we light it?

HUGH. (*Running to the window and taking the candle.*)

Here, we'll light it with this.

ALYS. No! No!

LITTLE BETTY. (*Clasping her hands.*) You shall not take the Christ Child's candle.

MOTHER. (*Who has taken up her knitting.*) There, my lassies, there, good Hugh! What better than the candle that lights the blessed Christ Child on His way to set our Yule to roaring.

LITTLE BETTY. But, dear mother—

MOTHER. Rest thee, rest thee, Betty, nor clamor so rudely. (*Goes to the chest.*) Here's the fine piece of taper, I've been saving this long time. Dame Gillian, at the Big House, gave it to me. (*The* MOTHER *takes from the chest a tiny candle, a piece of tinsel and some bits of ribbon.*) And look ye, these also she gave to me.

CHILDREN. (*Delightedly.*) Oh! Oh!

MOTHER. How brave and gay 'twill make the holly wreaths, and one we'll hang o'er Father's fowling piece, as in the great hall they twine the holly 'round the armaments.

ALYS. Thank thee kindly, mother dear. (*With great ceremony the three children stand before the fire-place while the* MOTHER *lights the Yule log with her taper.* ALYS *claps her hands in glee.*) How brave it crackles and roars. Dost think the flames really go up to Heaven, mother?

MOTHER. Ay, that they do, and carry to the Heavenly Father our grateful thanks for Christ, His Son. Come now, little ones, and wreathe your Christmas greeneries.

(*The* MOTHER *takes* LITTLE BETTY *on her knee again. The others wind the wreaths. They sing quietly* "Away in a Manger." *There is a timid rap at the door. The children listen.*)

HUGH. I thought I heard a rapping at the door.

MOTHER. I think 'tis but the wind.

(*The children turn again to wind the wreaths, singing as before. Again the rap sounds.*)

MOTHER. Truly, 'tis a rapping.

HUGH. Shall I open the door, dear mother?

MOTHER. Certainly, my son. No one must be left out in the cold on this beautiful Christmas Eve. Open the door and let the stranger in.

(HUGH *throws open the door and* THE LONELY CHILD *appears.* HUGH *and* ALYS *hold out their hands. They lead him in. The* MOTHER *puts* BETTY *from her knee and gathers* THE LONELY CHILD *into her arms.* ALYS *and* HUGH *warm his hands and feet.*)

MOTHER. Such a cold little child! Mayhap he is hungry.

(ALYS *gets the bowl of milk and gives it to him.*)

THE CHILD. (*His head upon the* MOTHER'S *breast.*) 'Tis so warm and happy here!

MOTHER. Then rest and warm thee, little one.

LITTLE BETTY. (*Suddenly.*) Dost see our wreaths? We're twining them 'cause 'tis fair Christmas tide.

THE CHILD. Truly, yes, such beautiful wreaths.

HUGH. And the Yule log burns so bright to keep the Christ Child's feast. Come, Alys, let us finish putting the pretties on.

(*The children finish winding the wreaths, singing as before.* LITTLE BETTY *creeps close to her* MOTHER.)

MOTHER. Little ones, shall I tell thee the story of the first Christmas as my mother has told it me these many years?

CHILDREN. Yes, yes, sweet mother.

(HUGH *and* ALYS *sit close to her, and the room is very quiet as she tells the story.*)

MOTHER. Many, many years ago this very night, there were shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks. The wee lambs were fast asleep, and the large

sheep were sleeping too. The stars shone very bright and clear,—and all was very still. The shepherds watched upon the hillside, leaning on their crooks and hardly moving.

BETTY. Were the little lambs cold, mother?

HUGH. Hush—

MOTHER. Suddenly a great light shown through the darkness, and, lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shown round about them,—and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them:

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you great tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a little Babe who is to become your King, and who is to save the world from wrong and suffering. We shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

CHILDREN. (*Softly.*) Oh! Oh!

MOTHER. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly host, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

ALYS. 'Tis what we sing in church.

MOTHER. And it came to pass when the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said one to another: "Let us go now and see this thing which has come to pass." So the shepherds left their flocks sleeping on the hillside, and journeyed unto Bethlehem to the place where the angel had told them, and there they found the mother, —and the young Babe lying in a manger.

LITTLE BETTY. Ah!

MOTHER. And when they had seen it they marvelled, and they made known abroad the saying which was told them by the angel concerning the Child. And they that heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

The mother of the Babe kept all these saying and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds departed, and returned to their flocks, praising God for all the things they had heard and seen. (*Pause. A faint strain of music is heard.*) And the Child grew and waxed strong. They called His name Jesus, and He was full of grace, and truth, and wisdom. And it is Jesus who has taught the whole world to become better, and who has shown men how to love one another, even as our Father in Heaven loves us.

(*During the telling of the story the room has been growing darker.*)

HUGH. (*Wonderingly.*) How dark it is—

(*Suddenly a radiance fills the doorway and fills the whole room. The children stare at the* MOTHER *in amazement. The* CHILD *is gone. A pause. All is very still.*)

MOTHER. (*Very quietly.*) Truly, my little ones, methinks 'twas the Christ Child who came to us tonight. And, thus, through all the year His radiance will fill our hearts and home. (*She holds them closely. In the distance is heard just a strain of* "Christians All.")

CURTAIN

THE PURPLE IRIS [1]

A STORY FROM OLD JAPAN

By

ANTOINETTE WITHINGTON

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CHARACTERS

CHRYSANTHEMUM
CHERRY BLOSSOM } *Daughters of the Samurai*
LOTUS FLOWER

MOTO—*Keeper of the palace gardens*

AYAME—*Daughter of a nobleman fallen from favor*

HER MAJESTY—*The Empress of Japan*

PROLOGUE—INTERLOGUE—EPILOGUE—*Taken by one person, representing a Scholar of Japan*

SETTING

A bower of wistaria and roses in the garden of the Emperor.

THE PURPLE IRIS

PROLOGUE

THE SCHOLAR OF JAPAN: In Japan, most honorable friends, we live with nature. The birds and the flowers are our philosophers and our teachers and we listen to all they say. When birds fly high and skies are blue we feel that the gods are favoring our lives, as we believe that the children who are born under fair skies are fortunate in life's beginning. But if, perchance, the storm god reigns and his messengers, the driving wind, the lowering clouds, the flashing lightning, cast their shadows over us, our fortunes may be changed and we bow our heads to the ground in humility and fear until the storm god passes by and we are again in the radiance of the white light of the sun.

So it happened in the family of one Murata, a noble lord, who sat in favor with his Emperor and his countrymen. Through a dark and mysterious misunderstanding Murata found himself in great disgrace. Broken in spirit and desperate in mind, he committed the honorable release of his country. His wife soon followed him into the unknown, leaving behind a little daughter less than a week old. This baby girl was secretly taken into the hearts and the home of the keeper of the gardens and his good wife. Knowing the noble birth of the little girl, they did all within their power to fit her for a more favorable fortune should the wheel turn that way. May we watch the turning of the wheel.

SCENE I

Near the wistaria bower in the garden. Climbing roses and wistaria in bloom. Other shrubbery. A tree of cherry blossoms.

AYAME. (*Bending over a spray of cherry blossoms which she has picked from the tree.*) O beautiful flowers, beloved of my country, what have you to say to me?

(*Voices are heard coming near, and* AYAME *conceals herself in the shrubbery. Enter* CHRYSANTHEMUM, CHERRY BLOSSOM, LOTUS FLOWER—*all laughing and chatting in low tones.*)

CHERRY BLOSSOM. We will bring her here to the wistaria bower. There could be no prettier place. Here on this seat.

CHRYSANTHEMUM. What will your gift be to our Empress, Cherry Blossom?

CHERRY BLOSSOM. (*Lifting her hands as though holding a bowl.*) Old Satsuma! (*Lifting her hands still higher, and all girls raise their eyes following the movement.*) It has been in our family for centuries. Look! (*Changing the position of the supposed bowl.*) The sheen of the pottery is like satin made from moonbeams. It is not like gold or silver in the coloring but it would seem that the light from the stars had so blended with the last tones of the sunset that we see—Satsuma. Do you think (*Turning to the girls with a slight bow.*) that the Empress would deign to accept so humble a gift?

CHRYSANTHEMUM. Exquisite! (*Girls bow to* CHERRY BLOSSOM *and to each other.*)

LOTUS FLOWER. A royal gift! (CHERRY BLOSSOM *returns the salutation.*)

CHRYSANTHEMUM. And I shall give her a beautiful fan, wrought by the hands of the finest artist of the time. It, too,

has come down through many years in our family. The silk is so fine that the silvery threads of the sheerest cobweb would be coarse beside it. Then it is shot with spun gold, and in the old, old ivory handle is carved the romance of a royal princess. Do you think it is worthy to be a royal gift?

(*Again the girls bow to each other in appreciation and with exclamations of praise.*)

LOTUS FLOWER. (*Stepping a little aside.*) Your gifts will be wonderful! I fear my own is not worthy to follow yours.

CHRYSANTHEMUM. It surely is.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. It could but be lovely coming from your sweet hands.

(*The girls bow—three short bows,* LOTUS FLOWER *returning them.*)

LOTUS FLOWER. My gift will be an ornament for the head-dress of our Empress. It is shaped as a crescent. It is made from the wings of rarest butterflies and is set with real jewels which glisten as dewdrops in the morning. It is as delicate as the finest lace and as soft in texture as the little breast of a humming bird. A bit of glory to set upon her hair. This ornament has been kept from the light of day for years and then more years, preserved, I believe, to be the birthday gift of our Empress.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. Your gift is more precious than any because it will rest upon her head.

(*All the girls bow again, three times, to each other.*)

CHRYSANTHEMUM. Her Majesty has promised to meet us here for an hour before the darkness comes. We could not be more honored.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. We will ask her to sit on this seat where the wistaria hangs so lovingly down.

LOTUS FLOWER. Yes, that will be beautiful.

(*The girls go out, chatting.*)

(AYAME, *stepping out from the shadow, drops on her*

knees and bows her face to the ground. Enter MOTO, *the gardener, from the side, in agitation.*)

MOTO. (*Lifting* AYAME *from the ground in a gentle, troubled manner.*) Beautiful heart of the flowers, what is so hurting you that you so humble yourself?

AYAME. Did you not hear? (*Bowing her head very low.*)

MOTO. About the birthday of the Empress? Yes, it is to-morrow, and may the gods preserve her in happiness. Gifts to be given to her here in our garden! From her ladies-in-waiting, Cherry Blossom, Chrysanthemum and Lotus Flower. And you, little bloom from heaven, have no such gift to offer the Empress of your heart—that is the trouble?

AYAME. Most honorable father, you are so kind to me, but you are not rich and we have no treasures such as they have—we have only our love. O, how gladly would I serve our Empress! The very hardest thing would be a joy to do for her, she is so gracious. She is beautiful! She is good! What more could even an Empress be? (*Then in animation* AYAME *continues.*) The Purple Iris, father! It is my birth-flower. Could I not give her the Purple Iris?

MOTO. It would be a royal gift, Ayame, child, and she would appreciate it far more than you now understand. (*Aside.*) The gods may listen. (*Turning to* AYAME, MOTO *continues.*) Yes, yes, you may give the Purple Iris, but it must be gathered at the first glimmering of a new day. It must be plucked from under the water and sheltered from the light by your own hands. You must watch it and guard it from the sight of everyone until you, yourself, can place it in the hands of your noble lady. To gather the Purple Iris, my child, as a gift to royalty, you must sacrifice rest, sleep; waiting through long hours, fasting, until the time is set. If you can do this you will learn the innermost secret of love.

(AYAME *drops to her knees again.* MOTO *lifts his head and speaks in earnest tones.*) What may be here enshrined I know not.

(AYAME *rises and* MOTO *continues in lowered voice.*) To-morrow, at the coming of the dawn, go you to the little bridge which crosses the stream of love, where the wistaria hangs in greatest luxuriance. There, Ayame, you will find the most beautiful Purple Iris which the world has ever seen. Pluck it, my child! It is supreme, and it is your own to give. Remember, you must go alone and, forgetting all else, wait in seclusion with your treasure until towards evening; then offer your gift, here with the others, and offer it as to the gods! (*They go out.*)

INTERLOGUE

THE SCHOLAR OF JAPAN. A day passes. It is twilight of the next day.

SCENE II

The same as Scene I. The EMPRESS *comes slowly and alone into the garden. She looks about her and soliloquizes.*

EMPRESS.

Fragrant flowers are very sweet,
But one day they will fade away.
Who can say this world's unchanging?
Crossing o'er the mount of change today,
We shall find no dreaming, no illusion,
But enlightenment. [*Old Japanese*]

(*She picks a rose and walks to the seat near the wistaria bower, and dreamily continues.*)

If in the secret heart
We follow the hallowed way,
Surely the gods will guard
Though never a prayer we say. [*Old Japanese*]

(*Enter* CHRYSANTHEMUM, CHERRY BLOSSOM *and* LOTUS FLOWER. *Seeing the* EMPRESS *there before them they drop to their knees and bow their heads to the ground, remaining so until she laughingly says.*) I have come to my own birthday party, an uninvited guest. What will you have me do, little ladies of the sun? Play with the butterflies? They are sleeping.

(*Girls rise and bow.*)

CHRYSANTHEMUM. Sweet and most honorable Empress, we bring to you on your birthday such humble gifts as our hands can offer. (*The girls each take their gift from concealment in the sleeves of their kimonos. Each gift is beautifully wrapped and tied with red and gold.*) Gifts which have been honored by the great, treasured by the loyal, and now are given in adoration to you, our beloved Empress, by Cherry Blossom, Lotus Flower, and Chrysanthemum, your most humble subjects.

(*As the* EMPRESS *is receiving the gifts,* AYAME *quietly enters from the side. She comes slowly into view, carrying in her hand the Purple Iris. With eyes cast down, her head bowed low, she approaches the place where the* EMPRESS *is seated. The girls, seeing* AYAME, *step farther back and the* EMPRESS, *seeing her also, exclaims, half audibly, with suppressed surprise.*)

EMPRESS. The Purple Iris!

(AYAME *drops to her knees and bows her head, then, rising, she steps a little nearer, and in a soft, clear voice, speaking slowly and distinctly, she says.*)

AYAME. And I, most loving sovereign of my life, bring

to you the only gift I have to offer, my love, and the Purple Iris flower. It has been created and nurtured by the gods, and because it is my birth-flower I have been allowed to pluck it. I gathered it, dear Empress, by the light of the morning stars. No eyes but mine have seen its beauty since that moment. It is the only gift I can offer you on your birthday and my own.

EMPRESS. (*In great agitation.*) Who are you, my child? Your name?

AYAME. I am Ayame, most noble lady—the daughter of Murata. Since my mother died when I was a few days old, I have lived in this garden as do the flowers around you, loving my Empress as do they.

EMPRESS. Ayame! My own name. Murata's child! It seems incredible— O, those sad, sad days!—Let me look into your eyes. (AYAME *steps closer to the* EMPRESS *and lifts her face lovingly.*) It is true! You have your mother's gentle look. She was my dearest friend. O, I did not know—I did not know. I was sent far, far away. Surely the gods have answered—I feel the truth within my heart. (*Turning to* AYAME *she says.*) You shall be my own little daughter, sweet heart of flowers—my very own. All heaven must be singing. (*Turning to the three girls, who have watched and listened in tense wonder.*) Your gifts have made me very happy and I shall treasure them as pearls from your loving hearts. You have brought me not only your gifts with your love, but you have opened the way for my little Ayame to come—Ayame, my child and the princess of our house.

(*The girls bow very low to* AYAME *and to the* EMPRESS. *The* EMPRESS *takes* AYAME'S *hand and together they follow the girls from the garden.*)

(*In the near distance* MOTO *is seen kneeling; he remains so until the* EMPRESS *and* AYAME *disappear from view.*)

EPILOGUE

THE SCHOLAR OF JAPAN. So the wheel has turned, and the old, old truth remains—that love is the greatest thing in the world.

CARRY ON [1]

A FATHER AND SON PLAY

By

ANNE DEISS FIELDEN

1 Included by courtesy of the author. A fee of $5.00 must be paid to Miss Anne Deiss Fielden, 2278 St. Claire St., Detroit, Mich., for the right to produce this play.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

In order of their appearance

FATHER
MOTHER
BILLIE
FOUR SAILORS
COLUMBUS
THE FATHER OF COLUMBUS
SIX MEMBERS OF THE MUSICAL SOCIETY OF BOLOGNA, ITALY
THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY
WOLFGANG MOZART
LEOPOLD MOZART, *his father*
PAGE
GEORGE WASHINGTON
WILLIAM, *an old negro servant*
THE FATHER OF GEORGE WASHINGTON
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
CUNNIE, *his nurse.*
MR. STEVENSON, *his father*
THEODORE ROOSEVELT
NEWSPAPER REPORTER
ROOSEVELT'S TWO SONS

CARRY ON

SETTING: *A modern home arranged so that there is a divan in one corner and the opposite side of the stage bare enough to allow following scenes to be enacted on it without noticeably removing furniture.*

PROLOGUE

TIME: *Saturday afternoon.* MOTHER *sits sewing.* FATHER *enters, takes off coat and hat and places a package on table.*

FATHER. Hello, Mother. Been busy today?

MOTHER. Hello. Yes, but this heat makes work so hard. I'm glad you have the afternoon off.

FATHER. Having the afternoon off doesn't mean that I can stop working. I'd like to take a nap but that garage door needs attention. Where's Billy?

MOTHER. Playing as usual, I suppose. I'm getting really worried about that boy. Seems all he wants to do is play! I don't know what to do about it. As soon as breakfast was over he left and there hasn't been a sign of him since. He knows he has work to do but refuses to do it. If he would only say "No," but he doesn't. He just leaves when I am busy elsewhere and punishment when he returns seems to have no effect. Then look at this! (*Hands* FATHER *a book.*)

FATHER. Hum, "Jack, the Bad Man of Arizona." (*Turns pages.*)

MOTHER. Exactly. That's what he was reading at the breakfast table this morning. Of course, I wanted to see what he was reading and when I suggested that it was not

exactly the type of book he should read he became very angry, said that he wasn't a baby, that the other boys could read what they liked. Then he flung himself out of the house. I'm at my wits' end!

FATHER. Now, that's queer! This very morning, Jones, who works in the next aisle, told me of a wonderful book which a librarian had recommended for his boy. It seems that his son is an even greater problem than Billie. It sounded so interesting and he seemed to think it was so good that I stopped at Evans and bought it. (*He goes to table, picks up package and unwraps it.*) "Famous Fathers and Sons." It shows the part the fathers of some great men played in their development. Of course, it seems to be written to show the importance of a father's influence, but (*Goes over to* MOTHER *and pats her on the back.*) everyone knows that without a mother the best father would have a difficult time. (*Thoughtfully.*) Now if we could only get Billie to read this it might do more good than lectures by us.

MOTHER. (*Who has been glancing over book.*) One way to make certain that he will not read it is to give it to him. Perhaps if we just leave it here for a few days his attention will be attracted to it and for want of something better to do he may read it.

FATHER. You're right as usual, Mother. And now I'll have to fix that garage door.

MOTHER. All right. There are several things I must attend to before dinner.

(*Exit* FATHER *and* MOTHER. *Slam of door is heard off stage and a cap thrown violently on the floor precedes* BILLIE'S *entrance.*)

BILLIE. (*Rebelliously.*) Gosh! Nothing to do. Sam's just gone to the country and Dick's working. Wonder why he wants to help his father when he doesn't have to. (*Goes to window.*) Huh, Daddy's fixing that garage door. Suppose

I should have started it this morning. Maybe he wants me to help him now. (*Walks back to center stage, hands in pockets.*) Aw! It's too hot! (*Mops brow.*) Guess I'll take a nap before dinner. (*Yawns.*) There's nothing else to do except read and what fun is that when you can't have the book you want? Wonder what mother objected to in "Jack, the Bad Man of Arizona"? Guess she wants me to be a regular sissy and read the books on the library list. What does she know about what I want to read? (*Goes over towards divan when bright cover of book on table attracts his attention.*) What's this? (*Picks up book, then disgustedly.*) Aw gosh! "Famous Fathers and Sons," a dry old book! (*He aimlessly begins to turn the leaves.*) Why, here's Robert Fulton! We studied about him and the Clermont yesterday. A picture of Washington and Roosevelt! Say, this isn't so bad! I always liked History. (*Strolls over to divan, sits down and begins to read as curtain drops.*)

SCENE I. COLUMBUS

SETTING: *Stage in darkness with exception of a spotlight turned on opposite side from divan on which* BILLIE *is sitting. Light reveals a wharf on which four dirty but gaily dressed Italian sailors of the period of Columbus are lolling.*

FIRST SAILOR. Our last venture was most successful. We sailed along the shore of Africa until we dared go no farther. Strange were the sights we saw. The people who watched us from the shore were black and fierce in appearance. There are tales of much gold and many treasures in this wild country. Some would fain have gone ashore, but others demurred. Then, too, some would have gone even farther. . . .

SECOND SAILOR. (*Interrupting.*) Nothing, not even gold or treasures could make me venture thus far. Danger lurks in every cave. Dost Thou not remember the sea dragon and terrible serpent who are ever ready to devour those who venture into their domain? I'll go only where others have gone before.

THIRD SAILOR. (*Assenting.*) 'Tis true. The seas become angry. Thou knowest what happened to Guiseppe on our last voyage.

ALL EXCEPT FIRST SAILOR. (*Fearfully.*) Aye! Aye!

THIRD SAILOR. The dragon came up in a mighty wave and pulled the scoffer beneath the waters. After that even the most daring were willing to turn back.

FOURTH SAILOR. 'Tis well to stay in known seas.

FIRST SAILOR. Known seas do not bring silks and spices. Would Maria have a new silk dress and my children plenty to eat if I were a coward? 'Tis profitable to dare!

(*During the last speech* COLUMBUS *and his father have entered and are listening to what the sailor says.*)

FATHER. Are these the sailors of which thou hast been telling me so many tales?

COLUMBUS. Aye, these and many others! Day after day have I sat upon the quay and listened to them. They have fired me with a great ambition. I, too, desire to become a sailor and gain many riches. I should like to be as one of them.

FATHER. Nay, Christopher! There is danger on the sea and he who would venture upon it must be fearless, brave and strong. Thou art but a child and hast childish notions. The dangers and rewards which seem so desirable now would vanish in the hardships thou wouldst't encounter. Wouldst't thou have the courage to leave thy home and parents to brave the angry sea?

COLUMBUS. Oh, but I would, father. I would be willing to

venture my life to become a sailor. 'Twould be wonderful to see new lands and (*Dreamily.*) mayhap find a new way to India, the land where riches and spices are thine for the taking. There adventure and beauty are commonplace. Father, may I, please? I would bring home beautiful gifts for mother and thee.

FATHER. (*Sadly putting arm over his boy's shoulder.*) We shall see, my son, we shall see. Perhaps as thou growest oi ler . . .

(*During the last speech* COLUMBUS *and his* FATHER *stroll off stage. The sailors, who have been talking amongst themselves during the conversation between* COLUMBUS *and his* FATHER *begin again.*)

FIRST SAILOR. I do not agree with thee. Cowards, cowards, I call all.

OTHERS. (*Make threatening gestures.*) What? Cowards!

CURTAIN

SCENE II. WOLFGANG MOZART

SETTING: *Hall of the Musical Society of Bologna, Italy. As the curtain rises all traces of the wharf are removed, instead there is a long table which is covered with a yellow cloth. Around this table are seated the members of the society. They are dressed in the conventional clothes of the period. The* PRESIDENT *is at the head of the table, the members sit facing the audience with the exception of the one at the foot. The member next to the president is deeply absorbed in a manuscript, the others are watching him intently.*)

FIRST MUSICIAN. (*Shaking head and handing manuscript to man next to him.*) Not until mine own eyes do see this

wonder child, Wolfgang Mozart, composing will I believe that it was he who composed this. Why, it is a masterpiece!

(*The* SECOND MUSICIAN, *now holding the manuscript, has been deeply absorbed in reading it but now he looks up.*)

SECOND MUSICIAN. 'Tis said that at the tender age of five years he played the Masters.

THIRD MUSICIAN. There must be in the youth great genius. Let us encourage him and the world will mayhap be richer for that which he will give to it.

(*Enter a* PAGE.)

PAGE. (*Announcing.*) Leopold Mozart, Wolfgang Mozart. (*Bows and exits.*)

(*Enter* MOZART *and his* FATHER. *They bow to the members of the society, the* PRESIDENT *arises.*)

PRESIDENT. (*To* FATHER.) Sir, thou art welcome. Wolfgang Mozart, we are assembled to test thy genius. We are agreed that yonder manuscript is singularly beautiful and wish by test to make certain that it is thine own work. If thou passest this test thou wilt be appointed a member of the most illustrious musical society in Italy. Thou wilt become one of our famous guild. (*Picks up paper in front of him.*) Here we have a difficult anthem for which we wish suitable music. It is to be written in four parts.

(*The* PRESIDENT *gives the anthem to* MOZART *who bows. At a clap of the hands the* PAGE *enters.*)

PRESIDENT. Thou wilt be given as much time as thou deemest necessary. Go, and may we not be disappointed in thee.

FATHER. My son, I go with thee in spirit. May this composition be the most beautiful of all thou hast ever composed. May the grace of God go with thee and help thee. (*Quietly.*) I shall await thy return with faith in thy success.

MOZART. (*To* PRESIDENT, *bowing.*) I thank thee, sir. (*To*

FATHER.) My past successes have been due to thy faith in me, my father. I thank thee and will strive not to disappoint.

(*He bows and follows* PAGE *from room.*)

PRESIDENT. (*Beckoning to* LEOPOLD *and indicating chair next to him.*) Wilt thou not await the return of thy son here?

(*As* LEOPOLD *takes seat next to* PRESIDENT *and members talk among themselves curtain falls for ten seconds to indicate lapse of time. Reopens on same scene.*)

FOURTH. MUSICIAN. (*Picking up hour glass.*) He has been gone half an hour.

FIFTH MUSICIAN. 'Twill take many half hours to compose music suitable to such an anthem.

SIXTH MUSICIAN. Aye, 'tis true. I myself made an attempt. (*Door opens and* MOZART *enters.* PRESIDENT *and* FATHER *arise to greet him.* PRESIDENT *accepts manuscript, begins to read notes. All watch him intently. A surprised expression appears on his countenance and he excitedly hands the manuscript to the nearest member. He does the same. The manuscript is thus passed to each member who in turn expresses the most profound amazement and they converse excitedly with one another.*)

PRESIDENT. You have seen Mozart's manuscript and will now cast your ballots which will decide whether or not the lad will become a member of our society.

(PAGE *passes ballots, collects same in box which he presents to the* PRESIDENT. *They are counted. Then the* PRESIDENT *arises.*)

PRESIDENT. The Musical Society of Bologna, Italy, has voted to accept you, Wolfgang Mozart, as one of its members. (*Shakes hands.*)

FATHER. (*Arises and embraces Wolfgang.*) I knew it,

my son! I knew it!

(*As the members arise and congratulate him the curtain falls.*)

SCENE III. GEORGE WASHINGTON

SETTING: *A garden in which an old negro is industriously spading a bed of cabbages.*

(*As the curtain rises* GEORGE WASHINGTON *is interestedly watching the old negro working.*)

GEORGE. William, did you plant those cabbages?

WILLIAM. No, indeedy not, Massa. Dis is de patch Massa planted, himself. Dey is de pride ob his heart, dey is!

GEORGE. I wonder why father should bother to plant cabbages. (*Suddenly a surprised expression appears on his face. Excitedly he comes nearer and snatches the hoe from* WILLIAM.) William, look!

WILLIAM. What, Massa?

GEORGE. Why, William, it's a miracle! Look! (*Traces letters in the ground.*) G E O R G E ! Why that's my name. The cabbages write my name!

(WILLIAM *who cannot read scratches his head incredulously and looks at the patch with superstitious awe.*)

GEORGE. (*Calling.*) Father, oh, father! Do come and see.

(*Enter* FATHER *hurriedly.*)

FATHER. What is the matter, my son?

GEORGE. These cabbages are coming up and writing my very name. Look!

FATHER. (*Looks intently and seems very much surprised.*) That's very curious.

GEORGE. Yes, but who did it?

FATHER. I suppose they just grew that way. That could easily happen, could it not?

GEORGE. Of course not! They wouldn't grow that way if somebody hadn't made them do it.

FATHER. Why not, my son?

GEORGE. Why, father, did you ever see anybody's name in a plant bed before?

FATHER. Well, it might happen if you had never seen it before.

GEORGE. Well, somebody did it and I daresay you did, to scare me.

FATHER. (*Slowly.*) You are quite right, I did it, not to scare you, but to introduce you to your real father.

GEORGE. My real father? But that is you! I have never known a father but you, sir.

FATHER. Are you quite sure?

GEORGE. (*Thoughtfully.*) Aye, now I know whom you mean. You mean God, don't you?

FATHER. Again you are right. There are some people who say everything happens by chance. They say their blessings or trials are but good or ill luck! But they are mistaken, my son, there is someone who plans everything. All the thousands of good things you enjoy are planned by God and chance or luck has nothing to do with it.

GEORGE. Oh, father. I'm glad you showed me. I always thought you were the best father in the world and sometimes was afraid you might die and leave me all alone. Now I have nothing to fear.

(*Curtain closes on tableau of* GEORGE *looking into his* FATHER'S *face as he lays his hand paternally upon his son's shoulder.* WILLIAM *has gone on his knees and is intently studying the plants and nodding his head.*)

SCENE IV. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

SETTING: *Living room with couch on which a small boy is resting.*

ROBERT. Cunnie, my side hurts again.

CUNNIE. (*Puts aside book she has been reading and gets some tin soldiers. Arranges them on counterpane during the following.*) Now, Master Robert, if you'll play with your tin soldiers you'll forget all about your side. Here's a hill and the army is down in the valley. Now, here comes—

ROBERT. (*Pettishly scattering soldiers.*) I don't want to play with my tin soldiers. I want my father to hold my hand and tell me a story. That always makes me feel better.

CUNNIE. (*Picking up soldiers. Coaxingly.*) You wouldn't want to disturb your father when he is busy, would you? (*Gets a toy city.*) Come, let's plant a city for the soldiers to ransack. Here's the main street. They'll have to come up this way and then will be—

ROBERT. I want my father!

(NURSE *leaves room while* ROBERT *scatters trees and houses and by restless tossing shows he is in pain. Reënter* CUNNIE *with* MR. STEVENSON.)

CUNNIE. I told him you were busy but nothing would do but that you come and tell him one of your stories. Sure enough, you're spoiling Master Robert.

STEVENSON. Well, I don't consider time spent with my son wasted, Cunnie. I would rather leave some of my affairs than feel I was losing his confidence and interest. (*To* ROBERT.) What does my son want tonight?

ROBERT. Oh, Father, I'm so glad you came. My side hurts worse and worse and nothing makes me forget my pain but a story. Will you tell "Ala Baba and the Forty Thieves"?

STEVENSON. (*Sits on edge of couch and takes his hand.*) Very well, "There lived in ancient times in Persia, two brothers—"

CURTAIN

SCENE V. THEODORE ROOSEVELT

SETTING: *Consultation room in White House.*

REPORTER. Mr. Roosevelt, I feel that your success is due to your sympathy with all classes of people. Is there any special reason for this?

ROOSEVELT. Yes, I think there is. Very often we do not come close enough to people to really know them. Now the first time I was in the northwest I worked with cattlemen. I soon grew to have an immense liking and respect for them. I saw their fine qualities of honesty, trustworthiness, and above all their capacity for hard work with never a murmur of discontent. As I worked with them it seemed to me that they were in many respects better than the average eastern business man. (*Door opens noiselessly, child puts in head and then disappears.*) Then, after a while, I came in close contact with farmers and it didn't take me long until I had moved them up beside the cattlemen and had made up my mind that they (*This time two heads appear, and as the reporter looks surprised, disappear.*) were really the backbone of the nation. Then, because of circumstances, I was thrown in contact with railroad men and I gradually came to the conclusion—

(*Door opens and two boys come in, the bolder acting as spokesman.*)

ARCHIE. Say, Dad. It's after four!

ROOSEVELT. (*Quickly rising and looking at watch.*) So it is. Why didn't you call me sooner? One of you get my gun. (*Exit* ARCHIE.) I must ask you to excuse me. We'll finish this talk later. I promised the boys I'd go shooting with them at four o'clock and I never keep them waiting. It's hard for boys to wait. Good afternoon.

REPORTER. Indeed, sir, this report may mean a great deal politically—

ROOSEVELT. It does not matter what it means politically, my boys come first. If you will return tomorrow at nine I will be glad to continue the interview.

REPORTER. Very good, sir. Good day.

ROOSEVELT. Good day.

(*Exit* REPORTER. *Enter* ARCHIE *with gun.*)

ROOSEVELT. I think that today I shall wipe out yesterday's defeat. That rabbit you shot, Archie, tasted mighty fine, but the one I will shoot today is going to taste better. Where are your guns?

OTHER SON. In the hall. (*They all go out together.*)

CURTAIN

EPILOGUE

The setting is the same as for the Prologue. All traces of scenes between have disappeared. BILLIE *has fallen sleep over his book which has fallen to the floor. His* FATHER *returns, looks at* BILLIE, *shakes his head, picks up the book and puts it on the table. Then he goes over to his coat pocket, takes out paper, sits down in easy chair and begins to read.*

BILLIE *awakens, rubs eyes, stares about room and sees his* FATHER, *also the book on the table. Goes over to it slowly and picks it up, looks sheepishly at his* FATHER *who continues reading. Leaves room and returns almost immediately with a pair of house slippers with which he approaches his* FATHER.

BILLIE. Say, Dad, that's a bully book! May I have it if I earn it by helping Mother and you?

CURTAIN

RIP VAN WINKLE FOR MARIONETTES [1]

(DRAMATIZED FROM WASHINGTON IRVING)

By

ALTA E. THOMPSON

1 Used by courtesy of the author. For permission to produce this play apply to Miss Alta E. Thompson, The Charles Apts., 3333 Charles St., Baltimore, Md.

CHARACTERS

(as they appear)

NICHOLAS VEDDER, *Landlord of the Inn—His Majesty King George the Third*
DERRICK VAN BRUMMEL, *the village schoolmaster*
BROM DUTCHER, *villager, friend of Rip Van Winkle*
RIP VAN WINKLE
WOLF, *Rip Van Winkle's dog*
DAME VAN WINKLE
LITTLE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAINS. *One of Hendrik Hudson's crew*
CRONIES AT THE UNION HOTEL
JUDITH GARDENIER, *Rip Van Winkle's daughter*

PLACE: *A village at the foot of the Katskill Mountains.*

Part 1

SCENE 1—*Outside the Inn—His Majesty George the Third*
TIME: *One day, before the Revolutionary War*
SCENE 2—*Rip Van Winkle's mountain trip*
TIME: *Later, on the same day*

Part 2

SCENE 1—*Rip Van Winkle ends his sleep*
TIME: *Twenty years later than Part 1*
SCENE 2—*Rip Van Winkle comes home*
TIME: *Later, on the same day*

RIP VAN WINKLE FOR MARIONETTES

SUGGESTIONS AND DIRECTIONS

Scenery and Properties

Part 1—Scene 1—

At the left—winding paths and wooded glens, mountains in the background. (These scenes may be painted on cardboard.)

At the right—houses on a straggling village street.

Center—nestled among trees, with the distant mountains as background, the low, rambling Inn with a sign bearing the "rubicund portrait of His Majesty King George the Third." In a narrow shelf fastened to this picture are placed a table and two benches, near the Inn door. The door should give an impression of opening and closing. If the pictures are made on cardboard, a door may be cut, but any more than a suggestion of opening and closing will be fatal to the illusion intended, so some actor must "mind the door." Small mugs and a tankard may be made from clay and painted to look like pewter.

Scene 2—

The Inn picture is removed, the background of mountains is lowered to show that Rip Van Winkle *has arrived, and a higher mountain scene is placed behind the first. The street picture at the right, and the paths at the left are replaced by mountain scenes.*

Part 2—Scene 1—*Same as* Part 1, Scene 2.

SCENE 2—

Same as PART 1—SCENE 1 *with changes in detail—a larger Inn and the sign "Union Hotel, Jonathan Doolittle," a picture of* GEORGE WASHINGTON*; a flag pole with the thirteen stars and stripes, and minor details in the houses.*

CHARACTERS

NICHOLAS VEDDER *is impressive and complacent. His head is round and his hair is cut Dutch fashion. He smokes his long pipe continually except when he drinks, then he lays the pipe deliberately on the table. His belted coat is brown and he wears light cuffs and a wide collar. Because he is the landlord, he wears a linen apron. His trousers would be knickerbockers—but Burattini puppets do not show their legs, so the covering for the hand of Vedder's puppeteer, as for all the others, is a skirt-like garment of the color proper with the rest of the costume.*

DERRICK VAN BRUMMEL, the schoolmaster, is dapper and *tall. He has high cheek bones, a very long nose, and sunken eyes. Spectacles of black wire make him look solemn and learned. His hair, gray from much study of the "most gigantic words in the dictionary," is gathered in a queue at the neck. His black suit, with wide collar and cuffs, equips him for any emergency—whether it be school-teaching, choir-leading, or grave-digging.*

BROM DUTCHER *is somewhat like* NICHOLAS VEDDER *in face. Like* NICHOLAS, BROM *is ruddy from much imbibing. He may wear blue or brown with light cuffs and collar. He wears a cap or a tall Dutch hat—whichever his puppeteer can manage better.*

RIP VAN WINKLE *is a slovenly person, very tall and boyish. His clothes may be brown or blue, and much the worse for wear. He has neither collar nor cuffs and his belt is not fastened. Brown hair is seen beneath his black hat which he wears at a rakish angle. He carries a brightly polished fowling-piece. In Part 2 another puppet must be used. The features are the same but the cheeks are pale and sunken, the hair, straggling and white, hangs about his shoulders and sprouts out of the holes in his battered old hat. His beard, as white as snow, reaches to his knees. His suit is drab as if faded by rains and suns; his gun is rusty and falls apart when he picks it up.*

WOLF *is a yellowish dog with slight hints of many breeds and no one predominating. He can be very agile as he hops about on the puppeteer's forefinger and he expresses his varied emotions by means of barks, yells and growls.*

DAME VAN WINKLE *has sharp features and hair drawn tightly in a knot. She wears a neat blue dress with kerchief, apron and cap of white material. Her movements are quick and impatient and her voice shrill and angry. She may carry a broom or a ladle for* WOLF'S *benefit if her puppeteer desires.*

THE OLD MAN IN THE MOUNTAINS *is much smaller than the others. He has sharp features, ruddy cheeks and very bright eyes and a pointed beard. He is dressed in gray, the blouse belted and the whole costume trimmed with buttons, as the story specifies. He wears a tall peaked hat and carries a keg on one shoulder and a flag with the other hand.*

JUDITH GARDENIER *may be* DAME VAN WINKLE *in a neat little mob cap, instead of the Dutch cap, and a flowered Colonial dress. She may carry little* RIP *in her arms if*

her puppeteer is willing.

THE CRONIES *at the hotel wear the clothes of a generation later than those worn in Part 1. The coats may be bright-colored, with frills at neck and wrists, the waistcoats gay, the hats, three-cornered, and the hair done in queues tied with black ribbon. There may be as many cronies as the puppeteer can make and operate.*

Hands of heavy pasteboard or light wood may be made and one fastened in each sleeve. The puppeteer holds the head on his forefinger and puts on the skirt, then the coat, and with his thumb in one sleeve and his middle finger in the other sleeve, he makes the puppet do his will. Puppets can do amusing things, for example— RIP VAN WINKLE *drinks from the mug held between the puppeteer's thumb and finger, bowing his head to meet the mug. He smacks his lips and lifts his head, then goes at it again, thus giving an impression of being buried in his cups.*

To operate this type of puppet, the puppeteers should sit on a bench behind the front part of the stage, and high enough to allow the hands to move easily across the stage and low enough to keep the puppeteers' heads from bobbing up in sight. All this is not as easy as it sounds and because the operation is difficult, the puppeteers should give all of their attention to the acting and the other actors should give the lines from either side of the stage where they can watch without being seen.

The first time this play was given a window sill formed the front stage and screens made the back and wings, and the windowshade served as stage curtain. The audience crowded around on the veranda in front of the window. It was a most amusing production and not at all costly.

PART 1—SCENE 1

DERRICK VAN BRUMMEL *and* NICHOLAS VEDDER *sit near the table outside the Inn. Mugs and a tankard are on the table. The door of the Inn is slightly ajar.* NICHOLAS *sits back comfortably and smokes incessantly.* DERRICK *reaches out for a mug and drinks at intervals, as though to punctuate his speeches.*

NICHOLAS VEDDER. Well, what will be the news to-day? Taxes, I suppose. Taxes, taxes, taxes are all we hear of. Soon there will be taxes on the very air we breathe. (*He speaks very slowly and puffs his pipe between words.*)

DERRICK VAN BRUMMEL. May I have another drink? Nothing like it for dispelling gloomy thoughts. (*Drinks.*) Yes, taxes. Such outrageous tyranny is enough to excite the populace to sedition. (*Slams his mug on the table and sits back as if in despair, then suddenly shields his eyes with his hands as he looks up the road to the right.*) Who comes? Why, it's none other than Brom Dutcher with news, I'll wager. (*Both look toward* BROM *as he approaches and sit up with interest awaiting him.*)

BROM DUTCHER. (*Comes to the table, throws his hat down in great disgust.*) His Highness the King has sent over troops to be quartered here—to protect us from the Indians. (DERRICK VAN BRUMMEL *and* NICHOLAS VEDDER *grunt with disapproval.*)

BOTH. Indians! Bah! Who wants their protection! That's not their reason! These English!

NICHOLAS VEDDER. I felt sure taxes weren't the only things we would have to bear. (*Sighs and makes room on the bench for* BROM DUTCHER.)

DERRICK VAN BRUMMEL. Let's drink to Peter Stuyvesant and the good old days. (NICHOLAS VEDDER *fills the mugs from the tankard, and they all drink.*)

BROM DUTCHER. I suppose now we'll have to do our share of feeding those loathsome Redcoats. I, for one, object.

NICHOLAS VEDDER. They must send 'em here because they have no room for 'em at home. (*All laugh at the joke.*)

BROM DUTCHER. You're right, Nicholas, you're right. Look! (*Pointing to the right.*) Here comes Rip Van Winkle—poor soul. My heart aches for him. The Dame has been at it again, no doubt.

(RIP VAN WINKLE, *followed by* WOLF, *enters as if trying to break away from a following of youngsters whose voices are heard urging him to tell them a story, mend a kite, or go fishing with them. When he sees the group at the Inn he quickens his pace.*)

NICHOLAS VEDDER. Come on, Rip Van Winkle. Join us in a toast to Peter Stuyvesant and the good old days.

RIP VAN WINKLE. (*Looks around furtively as he sits down.*) Thank you, I'll just have one drink but I dare not stay long. You understand my haste. (*All laugh and then they drink:* "To Peter Stuyvesant—the best governor of the colony.")

BROM DUTCHER. Have you heard the news, Rip Van Winkle?

RIP VAN WINKLE. News! No, something besides taxes?

DERRICK VAN BRUMMEL. His Majesty, King George—

BROM DUTCHER. (*Interrupts.*) Has sent over Redcoats to protect us from the Indians.

RIP VAN WINKLE. (*Wisely.*) As if we couldn't protect ourselves!

NICHOLAS VEDDER. Yes, but the King has other things in mind. I am certain that—

BROM DUTCHER. Rip—hide! Dame Van Winkle is coming! (RIP *tries to hide but is not quick enough.*)

NICHOLAS VEDDER. I wish I could help you.

DERRICK VAN BRUMMEL. But you can't, and since this is

going to be a scene, I suggest we go inside. (*He and* Brom Dutcher *manage to get inside and out of sight.* Nicholas Vedder *tries to pull* Rip Van Winkle *in the doorway as he goes but the* Dame *is too quick for them.*)

Dame Van Winkle. (*Excitedly.*) What are you doing here? How many times have I told you not to drink and idle your time away with these fellows?

Rip Van Winkle. (*Meekly.*) Just about six hundred times! (*Snickers are heard from the Inn.*)

Dame Van Winkle. I will have none of your insolence. (Wolf *barks as if enjoying the excitement.*)

Dame Van Winkle. And you too, just like your worthless master. Go straight home, both of you. Broken down fences to mend, potatoes to be dug, and you wasting your time here. (*Still scolding she enters the Inn. Through a window she may be seen scolding and flourishing her broom.*)

Rip Van Winkle. (*Stoops down and pats* Wolf *who returns the attention with a cheery "Woof, woof."*) Well, Wolf, this life is too much for us, let's go up the mountains and find a little peace.

(Wolf *barks and follows his master. They are seen wending their way rapidly towards the mountains at right. In the meantime* Dame Van Winkle *switches herself out of the Inn in high temper and goes left in the direction of her home. When she is quite out of sight,* Nicholas Vedder, Derrick Van Brummel *and* Brom Dutcher *come out of the Inn, stealthily at first, for fear that* Dame Van Winkle *has not concluded her lecture. When they are sure she is gone, they resume their seats and sit, silent.* Rip Van Winkle *and* Wolf, *out of danger on the mountain road, seem to recover their lost gaiety.* Rip *throws his hat up in the air, and* Wolf *barks and runs around in circles.*)

CURTAIN

PART 1—SCENE 2

RIP VAN WINKLE *and* WOLF *are lying on a grassy knoll in the mountains. At the left they look into a wild, lonely glen.*

RIP VAN WINKLE. (*Sitting up.*) Wolf, old boy, we have had a peaceful day. Hungry, are you?

WOLF. Woof, woof!

RIP VAN WINKLE. So am I. It is a rest to be away from the Dame's clattering tongue, eh, boy?

WOLF. (*Rubs against* RIP'S *shoulder.*) Woof, woof, woof!

RIP VAN WINKLE. She does make good cakes. It seems a long time since I had any. Oh, well, we better be going back to the village. It is late. See the sun? Getting low. Come on, let's prepare for the wrath to come from Dame Van Winkle. "Fences to be mended. Potatoes to be dug." That woman can suggest the most unpleasant things! Come along.

(RIP *and* WOLF *thread their way through the mountain path reluctantly. Suddenly a voice is heard in the distance hallooing.* WOLF *bristles.* RIP *stands transfixed.*)

LITTLE OLD MAN. (*Not yet in sight.*) Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!

(RIP *shields his eyes the better to see and peers in the direction of the voice.*)

LITTLE OLD MAN. (*Coming nearer.*) Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!

(WOLF *skulks to* RIP'S *side and growls menacingly. The* LITTLE OLD MAN *comes toiling towards them, the keg on one shoulder and the flagon strapped to the other arm.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. (*Approaches the stranger—bows.*) Good day, sir.

(*No answer.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE: How do you do?

(*No answer.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. Well, you called, didn't you?

(LITTLE OLD MAN *nods.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. Can't you speak now?

(LITTLE OLD MAN *shakes his head.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. Heavy keg you have there, eh?

(LITTLE OLD MAN *nods "yes."*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. Something good in it, eh?

(LITTLE OLD MAN *nods "yes" briskly.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. Want some help with it?

(LITTLE OLD MAN *nods very briskly, then points to the flagon and to the keg and makes a gesture to indicate that they both will drink.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. Oh—ho! (*Helps the* LITTLE OLD MAN *fill the flagon from the keg. With much polite bowing and passing of the flagon, they drink.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. To your health, sir.

LITTLE OLD MAN. (*Bows, passes the flagon again.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. What a beverage is this. (*Drinks again.*) What a beverage!

(LITTLE OLD MAN *bows again and starts to go.* RIP *tries to help him and goes a few steps with him then comes back.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. A beverage—indeed! Oh-ho, I'm so sleepy, Was—I—ever—so—sleepy? Run along, Wolf, tell the Dame I'll be there soon. (RIP *lies down and is soon fast asleep.* WOLF *barks at the retreating figure of the* LITTLE OLD MAN *then tries to arouse* RIP. *Failing in this, he lies down by the side of his sleeping master.*)

CURTAIN

PART II—SCENE 1

RIP VAN WINKLE, *old, with white hair and long white beard, and clothes in shreds, is seen lying on the knoll where he went to sleep twenty years ago. He wakes up slowly, turns his head with difficulty, raises one arm then the other, and with groans and sighs, sits up. He rubs his eyes and looks about him—all of the motions and creaking groans denote twenty years of sleep.*

RIP VAN WINKLE. Surely, I have not slept here all night. (*He rubs his head as if to think better.*) Oh! Oh! I remember now. That wicked flagon! Oh, that wicked flagon! (*Groans.*) What excuse can I give to Dame Van Winkle? (*Tries to get up, and reaches for his gun.*) That Dutchman must have taken my gun. What's this? (*He finds the rusty gun.*) Traded with me, did he? I'll go and tell him what I think of him. (*Tries to get up but falls back with groans.*) Oh, my back—it must have rained last night—my back is breaking in two! Oh—oh—my legs—what has happened to my legs? (*Groans and balances himself unsteadily.*) These mountain beds do not agree with me. If this frolic should lay me up with a fit of rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle. (*He looks around and then whistles.*) Wolf! Wolf! (*Whistles again.*) You wretched dog, where are you? (*Calls again.*) I never knew you to desert me before. (*Whimpers.*) You always stayed by me. Dame Van Winkle couldn't drive you from my side, and now you have left me alone. (*Calls again*). Wolf! Wolf! (*He rubs his head and encounters the long, white beard.*) What's this? A beard like this in a single night? What else has happened? Gun stolen, dog deserted me, and now this! I knew that liquor was queer, but it was good. (*Suddenly discovers his tattered clothes.*) He took my clothes, too. No

wonder he was so generous. Whatever will Dame Van Winkle say? Whatever will she say? (*He goes off limping and muttering and groaning.*)

CURTAIN

PART II—SCENE 2

First Cronie. Things have changed in the last few years. I can remember well when the Inn was called "The King George."

Second Cronie. It was a great place for gossiping in those days.

Third Cronie. More so than now?

First Cronie. Well, perhaps not, but there was much more to gossip about.

Second Cronie. Yes, yes. This is where everyone came to discuss politics, but now we talk about our President and the free and independent states, while then we exchanged our views on taxes, the awful taxes, the Redcoats, and the war. Those were exciting times. The old Inn could tell tales if it could talk.

Third Cronie. There is one tale I wish it would tell, and that is what happened to old Rip Van Winkle. He was a character in this village and he disappeared from sight, completely. My father used to tell me that he was lost in the mountains. I wonder. Seeing his lazy son just around the corner made me think of him.

First Cronie. Just like his father, they say. It is a good many years since old Rip went away with his dog and gun. To get away from a nagging wife and work, they say.

Second Cronie. What is the date? August 16, I'm blest! I always have had a way of remembering dates. It is just

twenty years to a day since Rip Van Winkle went away. You see it was my favorite story when I was a youngster, and my father always began it with, "Well, it was August 16, 1768."

THIRD CRONIE. That's interesting, now, isn't it? Never mind telling the rest of the story; you have inherited your father's skill at telling long yarns. (*They all smoke in silence.*)

FIRST CRONIE. There's some excitement on foot. See those youngsters? Wherever you see a crowd of children or a pack of dogs you may expect something interesting.

SECOND CRONIE. It's a tramp or a beggar. He's got away from the crowd! He's headed straight for here! Bless my soul—look at him. Shades of the departed, where does he hail from?

(*Children's voices and the barking of dogs from the direction of the village street. The sounds indicate that the crowd has gone in another direction.* RIP VAN WINKLE, *as we saw him on the mountain, earlier in the day, stumbles down the street until he reaches the Inn. He looks dazed and weary.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. (*Reading the sign.*) George Washington! Why, this was the Inn—only it's name was different. What was the name? I forget! (*He sees the* CRONIES *and bows stiffly, and starts to speak.*)

FIRST CRONIE. (*Interrupting.*) Who are you? What do you want?

SECOND CRONIE. Are you a Federal or a Democrat?

THIRD CRONIE. Can't you see he's all mixed up? (*To* RIP.) Now, my man, tell us your name.

RIP VAN WINKLE. (*Looking from one to the other.*) I am a poor old gentleman, a native of this place and a loyal subject of the King, God bless him!

CRONIES. A Tory! You have no place in this village!

RIP VAN WINKLE. Gentlemen, be patient with me. I am dazed, I do not seem to know where I am.

THIRD CRONIE. Tell us your name. Maybe we can help you.

RIP VAN WINKLE. My name is Rip Van Winkle.

ALL. (*In amazement and with loud laughter.*) What? Say that again, etc.

FIRST CRONIE. Rip Van Winkle just went around the corner, before you arrived.

RIP VAN WINKLE. Went around the corner? I? Am I myself or am I someone else? I saw a lazy-looking fellow back there. Am I Rip Van Winkle or is he Rip Van Winkle? I am fearfully mixed. Oh, that wretched flagon. Gentlemen, I never knew liquor to work such mischief. (*In despair.*) Doesn't anyone here know poor Rip Van Winkle?

JUDITH GARDENIER. (*She has slipped in unnoticed during all of the preceding.*) Rip Van Winkle? To be sure, he is my brother, and poor because he does not like to work.

RIP VAN WINKLE. (*Goes towards her and looks at her intently.*) My good woman, what is your name?

JUDITH GARDENIER. Judith Gardenier, sir.

RIP VAN WINKLE. And your father?

JUDITH GARDENIER. Rip Van Winkle, sir. Alas, dead and gone these twenty years.

RIP VAN WINKLE. Your mother? Where is she? (*He looks apprehensive.*)

JUDITH GARDENIER. Dead, sir, from a fit of temper at a peddler.

RIP VAN WINKLE. (*Aside.*) This is news. (*To* JUDITH.) My good woman, your father is not dead—he stands before you.

JUDITH. GARDENIER. O Father! I know your voice—it is the same. Where have you been these twenty years? (*They embrace.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE. It is a long, long story and you shall hear it all. That rascally crew on the mountains and their evil drink were my undoing. Gardenier, you say? Have you children?

JUDITH GARDENIER. Yes, indeed, and my youngest bears your name.

RIP VAN WINKLE. What a tale he will hear—my little grandson, Rip Van Winkle. (*Hesitates.*) How long did you say I have been gone?

JUDITH. GARDENIER. Twenty years, Father.

RIP VAN WINKLE. (*Tottering.*) Oh!

JUDITH GARDENIER. Come, Father, to my home. You need rest and quiet. Later you can tell all that happened. (*She leads him off while the men at the Inn watch in silence.*)

FIRST CRONIE. Wonders never cease, I'm blessed!

SECOND CRONIE. There's always been rumors of evil spirits in the mountains. Now we know the rumor's true.

THIRD CRONIE. Now I suppose you will have another long tale to tell. Where do you think he kept himself all those years?

CURTAIN

I'M TERRIBLY SORRY [1]

A PLAY WITH INTERRUPTIONS

By

PERRY BOYER CORNEAU

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PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

THE DIRECTRESS. *She is considerably older than the rest of the characters and of a nervous temperament*

GORDON. *He is a big, clumsy, round-faced, good-natured boy, older than the rest except the* DIRECTRESS

LETITIA, *a very plump and rosy little girl with a loud and penetrating voice*

ELIZABETH, *a little older, and thinner and taller, than* LETITIA

THE KING, *a big boy, but not as big or as old as* GORDON

THE QUEEN, *a little older and taller than* ELIZABETH

AN ATTENDANT, *a boy about the same age as the* KING

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD, *same size and age as* ATTENDANT

PIRATES, *five, or more, rather small boys, with very shrill voices*

SUNBEAMS, *five, or more, very small girls*

LEADER OF THE ORCHESTRA

CORNELIA, *a member of the orchestra*

THE ORCHESTRA

Of course none of the mishaps of the play really happen, but are only simulated. The falling scenery may be represented by drop-boards or boxes on the floor. The DIRECTRESS *need not really have a pail of water thrown over her. She need only wet her hair and pin a very wet cloth to her dress from which to wring the water. As to costumes:* GORDON *wears overalls; the characters in the play may be elaborately costumed or may wear ordinary clothes with tissue paper adornments appropriate to their parts in the play.*

I'M TERRIBLY SORRY

The curtain rises slowly and jerkily, disclosing, if possible, a most magnificent garden scene, with big flower pots containing bushes with gorgeously impossible blossoms, gigantic and imposing statuary, tall trees, balustrades, fountains, and what not.

In the exact center of the stage stands an extremely plump and rosy little girl named Letitia, *who is taking the part of the Princess in this unfortunate play. She is dressed within an inch of her life in a profusion of the conventional frills and furbelows, and appears very stiff, self-conscious, and uncomfortable. She stands motionless for some time. The only sign of life she gives is that her eyes grow wider and wider. A look of terror and distress follows. She opens her mouth, but closes it again. It becomes quite evident that she has totally forgotten her opening lines. A voice is heard off-stage addressing her; but the words are not distinguishable beyond the footlights. She is apparently being urged to begin her opening speech. Still silence. Suddenly she opens her mouth to its widest extent.*

Letitia. Wah—ah—wah! Wah—ooh—hoo—hoo—wah!

(*The voice off-stage is heard again.* Letitia *stops crying to listen. Another voice, that of a girl, is heard off-stage. The words are clearly audible.*)

Girl's Voice. (*Off-stage.*) I knew she couldn't remember her lines. But she would take the principal part. The little pig!

Directress. (*Off-stage, to the* Girl *who has just spoken.*) Elizabeth! You mustn't talk that way about your sister.

(*In a loud whisper, to* LETITIA.) Sssst! Letitia! Say "I am a little princess."

LETITIA. (*Gulping convulsively.*) I—am—a little—pig—ness—

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) Princess—Princess!

LETITIA. (*Shouting.*) Princess!! (*Then silence. After a moment, opening her mouth wide.*) Wah—ooh—ooh—I've forgotten the rest. I'm not a little pig! Ooh—ooh—wah!!!

(*The* DIRECTRESS *rushes in and seizes* LETITIA *by the arm.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*In a loud whisper.*) Letitia! Stop that disgraceful howling! You're ruining the play. (*She drags* LETITIA *down toward the front, shaking her vigorously.*)

LETITIA. Wah! Wah!!

DIRECTRESS. (*Aloud.*) Shut up! (*She gives* LETITIA *a resounding slap, which stuns her into momentary silence.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*Turning to the audience.*) I'm sorry. I'm terribly sorry. But Letitia has never acted in public before. She has forgotten her lines. What she means to tell you is that she is a little Princess and that she is walking in her garden, a happy little flower amid the flowers.

LETITIA. (*Recovering speech.*) Wah! Wah!! Wah!!! You slapped me! Wah!!!!

DIRECTRESS. (*Shouting, so as to be heard above* LETITIA'S *wailing.*) She wants to tell you that she herself is a happy little flower, a little rose amid the roses.

(*Music. A band of small boys attired as* PIRATES *come dancing in.*)

PIRATES. (*Singing, each one a different tune, in shrill, treble voices.*)

We're the fierce and bloody Pirate band!
We have just set foot on land!

Tra—la—le and tra—la lo—
Thus we sing wher'er we go!
(*Stamping their feet in unison.*)
Boom! Boom! Boom!

DIRECTRESS. (*Shrieking and gesticulating.*) No! No! No!!—Go back!—You don't come in yet— Get off the stage!

FIRST PIRATE. You said—

DIRECTRESS. (*Interrupting, and pushing the* PIRATES *off.*) Go on— Go back—

PIRATES. (*Singing nervously as they hurry off.*) We're the fierce and bloody Pirate band!

(*The* PIRATES *go out.*)

DIRECTRESS. My soul and conscience! I think I'm going mad! (*Turning toward the audience.*) I'm terribly sorry about this. If you don't mind we'll just lower the curtain a moment and start all over again. Just a moment, please. (*To someone off-stage.*) Lower the curtain!

LETITIA. Ooh—hoo—hoo ooh!! Wah!!!

DIRECTRESS. (*In a loud voice, to someone off-stage.*) I said, lower the curtain!

LETITIA. Wah—ooh—hoo!!!

DIRECTRESS. (*Shouting, to someone off-stage.*) Lower the curtain!! Why don't you lower the curtain?!!!

(GORDON, *a big, good-natured boy in overalls, with a smudge of dirt on his face, enters.*)

GORDON. (*Calmly.*) I can't. The dinged thing's stuck.

DIRECTRESS. Oh, for goodness sake! Can't any of you miserable children do anything right?! (*Starting out.*) Here, let me fix it! (*The* DIRECTRESS *goes out,* GORDON *follows her leisurely.*)

LETITIA. Wah! Wah!!! Wah!!! (LETITIA *starts to follow the* DIRECTRESS *out; but the curtain suddenly falls with*

a bang, leaving her in front of it.)

LETITIA. Oooh!!! Wah!!!!! You've shut me out!! Wah!!!!! (LETITIA *shrieks and beats on the curtain with her fists.*)

(*After a moment the curtain rises jerkily to a height of about a foot from the floor and apparently sticks there. With a loud wail* LETITIA *throws herself on the floor and rolls under the curtain which drops immediately as she disappears. From behind the curtain a loud wailing and angry voices are heard, gradually subsiding. After a few moments the* DIRECTRESS *appears before the curtain.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*To the audience.*) I am terribly sorry that all this has happened. But we have not had much time for rehearsals. And Letitia is a very nervous child and is in no state to go on. So if you don't mind we will omit the first scene. I will tell you what is supposed to happen. Then we will go on with the play. As she told you, or tried to tell you, Letitia is a little pig—I mean a little Princess, strolling in her garden, a happy little flower among the flowers. A little Poor Girl enters. That's Elizabeth. You will see her later. She wears ragged clothes; and the little Princess is very sorry for her. She has lots of nice clothes herself; so she offers to give the little Poor Girl the dress she is wearing. They go off the stage to exchange their dresses. While they are gone the Pirate band enters.—You saw them a while ago when they came in before they were supposed to.—As they came in before, I presume they are all ready. So we will begin with the scene where they enter.—(*To* GORDON, *off-stage.*) Raise the curtain. (*The curtain does not budge.*) Raise the curtain!! (*The curtain does not move.*) I said, raise the curtain!!!

GORDON. (*Sticking his head out.*) I can't. The dinged thing is stuck. (GORDON *disappears.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*After a moment of speechless indignation,*

to the audience.) *Ohm* dear! I am so sorry. You'll just have to excuse us, that's all. I can't understand it. The curtain worked perfectly during rehearsals. And Gordon seemed so mechanically minded. I was sure he would have no trouble with it.

(*The curtain jerks, rises a few inches, and falls back with a thud.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*Going to edge of curtain and speaking, off, to* GORDON.) Don't jerk it that way, Gordon.—Shall I help you?

GORDON. (*Off-stage.*) No. You just go on jollying the audience. I'll get it fixed in a minute.

DIRECTRESS (*To the audience.*) Well, I guess there's no help for it. I'll just have to let him take his time.

[NOTE: *If no orchestra is available the following scene is to be omitted, the* DIRECTRESS *merely asking the pianist to play a selection during the wait.*]

DIRECTRESS. As that may be quite a while I shall ask our orchestra to play something while we are waiting. (*Going to corner of curtain and speaking to someone off-stage.*) Will you ask the orchestra to come out and play for a few moments— What?—Oh, anything.—Yes, yes. Come on.

(The ORCHESTRA *enters, either on the stage or before it.*)

LEADER. What shall we play?

DIRECTRESS. (*Impatiently.*) Oh, I said, play anything.

LEADER. (*Joyfully.*) All right. We'll play ——— (*The popular tune of the moment.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*Hurriedly.*) Oh, no, no! Play something appropriate. Play ——— (*Give name of the classical or semi-classical piece that they do finally play.*)

CORNELIA. (*A member of the orchestra.*) Oh, no! Let's play "Hearts and Flowers."

LEADER. Oh, that stale thing! We've played it a thousand times. It's the first piece we ever learned.

CORNELIA. Well, all the more reason for playing it. It's something the rest of you know. That's more than you can say of ——— (*The piece they finally play.*)

LEADER. Miss Gray said to play something appropriate.

CORNELIA. Well, "Hearts and Flowers" is awfully appropriate. Isn't Letitia, I mean the little Princess,—isn't she a little flower among the flowers?

LEADER. We're going to play ——— (*The piece chosen.*)

CORNELIA. (*Stubbornly.*) I'm not. I'm going to play "Hearts and Flowers."

DIRECTRESS. Cornelia! Children! Please—please get started.

LEADER. (*To orchestra.*) Ready?

(*They begin playing the piece chosen, except* CORNELIA, *who bravely starts playing* "Hearts and Flowers.")

DIRECTRESS. Stop!! What are you doing?—Oh, this is terrible!

LEADER. It isn't our fault. It's Cornelia. She's playing "Hearts and Flowers."

DIRECTRESS. Cornelia, I am surprised at you. You will have to play what the rest do or leave the orchestra.

CORNELIA. Very well, I'll leave, then. (*She gets up and flounces out.*)

LEADER. Well, can you beat that!

DIRECTRESS. Never mind. Go on with your piece.

(*The orchestra begins to play. As the piece goes well this time the* DIRECTRESS *feels that she can safely leave, and goes out. When a few bars have been played and the orchestra is beginning to warm up to its work the curtain abruptly rises. On the stage are disclosed the* PIRATES. *Entirely oblivious of the orchestra they move about the stage stamping their feet and singing. The orchestra plays louder*

to drown out the singing; and the PIRATES *sing louder to drown out the orchestra. The din is indescribable.*)

PIRATES. (*Singing.*)

We're the fierce and bloody Pirate band.
We have just set foot on land.
Tra—la—le and—tra—la—lo—
Thus we sing where'er we go!
(*Stamping their feet in unison.*)
Boom! Boom! Boom!

DIRECTRESS. (*Hurrying in.*) Stop!—Oh, stop it!

(*The* PIRATES *and the* ORCHESTRA *redouble their efforts.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*Shouting.*) Stop!!! Stop!!!

(*The* ORCHESTRA *and the* PIRATES *gradually become silent.*)

DIRECTRESS. This is terrible! (*To* LEADER.) Why didn't you stop playing when the curtain went up?

LEADER. You asked us to play. You ought to let us finish our piece.

DIRECTRESS. (*To* PIRATES.) Why didn't you wait until they had finished?

(*The* PIRATES *stare at her stupidly and do not reply.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*To* ORCHESTRA.) Well, go on. Finish your piece.

LEADER. They threw us all off. We'll have to start over.

DIRECTRESS. (*Impatiently.*) All right. All right. Go on.

(*The* ORCHESTRA *starts to play, but stops as the* FIRST PIRATE *speaks.*)

FIRST PIRATE. Hay! What shall we do while they're playing?

DIRECTRESS. Oh, do anything.

LEADER. Keep quiet and give us a chance.

GORDON. (*Sticking out his head.*) Shall I lower the curtain?

DIRECTRESS. (*In alarm.*) For goodness sake, no!!! You'll never get it up again.

GORDON. (*Good-humoredly.*) All right. Just as you say. (*He disappears.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*To* ORCHESTRA.) All right. Go on.

(*The* ORCHESTRA *begins the piece again. The* DIRECTRESS *goes out. The* PIRATES *sit down on the floor and begin playing "knife." The* ORCHESTRA *plays its piece through to the end. When they have finished they pick up their instruments and go out. The* PIRATES *are so absorbed in their game that they do not notice that the music has stopped.* ELIZABETH, *as the Little Poor Girl, enters. She wears the same dress that* LETITIA *had on; but for her it is much too short and small; and her appearance is rather ridiculous. The* PIRATES *pay no attention to her. She stands there, not knowing what to do.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) Pirates! (*They pay no attention.*) Pirates!! (*They pay no attention.*) Pirates!!!!

FIRST PIRATE. (*Startled.*) What?!

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) Go on with the play. Please—

(*The* PIRATES *get up and put away the knife.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) "Ah, ha!—"

FIRST PIRATE. (*After a moment's silence, suddenly.*) Ah, ha! Ha, ah!

PIRATES. Ha, ah! Ah, ha!

FIRST. PIRATE. (*Pointing to* ELIZABETH.) The little Princess!

PIRATES. The little Princess!

FIRST PIRATE. Let us seize her and hold her for ransom!

PIRATES. Let us seize her and hold her for ransom!

ELIZABETH. Eeeeeek! Oh, please do not seize me and hold me for ransom.—I am only a little poor girl.

FIRST PIRATE. (*Brutally.*) Ho, ho! Ha, ha! With that dress—a little poor girl— Ho, ho! Ha, ha!

PIRATES. Ho, ho! Ha, ha!

FIRST PIRATE. Seize her!

ELIZABETH. Eeeeeek!

(*The* PIRATES *seize* ELIZABETH *and carry her off. The effect is somewhat spoiled as they stumble when half way across the stage and all fall down. They scramble to their feet and run out, leaving* ELIZABETH *alone. After a moment's hesitation she follows them.*)

ELIZABETH. Wait for me, you chumps! (*She runs out.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) No, no!! Gordon! Don't you lower that curtain!

GORDON. (*Off-stage.*) It's supposed to be lowered here.

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage, in alarm.*) You'll never get it up again!

GORDON. (*Off-stage. Good-humoredly.*) All right. Just as you say.

(*After a pause the* KING *and* QUEEN *enter.*)

QUEEN. (*Affectedly.*) Isn't this a beautiful morning!

KING. It is indeed.

QUEEN. How beautiful the flowers are!

KING. (*In a flat voice.*) The flowers are beautiful indeed.

QUEEN. (*Gushingly.*) Speaking of the flowers reminds me of our little flower, our darling daughter.

KING. (*As if he really did not care to know.*) Where is that sweet and flower-like child this morning?

QUEEN. I sent her out here to walk among the flowers, a little flower herself.

KING. (*Same expressionless tone.*) If you sent her out here then she ought to be out here.

QUEEN. (*As if struck by the originality of the idea.*) Why, so she ought.

KING. But she doesn't seem to be.

QUEEN. (*Looking around.*) Quite true. She is not here.

KING. She is not here indeed.

QUEEN. (*In alarm.*) If she is not here where is she?

KING. If she is not here she must be somewhere else.

QUEEN. But where?

KING. Where, indeed?

QUEEN. I asked you where.

KING. Well, I ask you, where?

QUEEN. (*Tragically.*) We must find out.

KING. (*Apathetically.*) We must indeed.

QUEEN. But how?

KING. We might ask someone.

QUEEN. But who—whom?

KING. That's it, who?

QUEEN. Whom—

KING. Who—

GORDON. (*Off-stage.*) Who—who—

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) Gordon, keep quiet. Whom—whom—

KING. Whom—whom—whom—

QUEEN. Well, ask somebody.

KING. (*Shouting.*) Whom is in attendance?

ATTENDANT. (*Entering.*) I am.

KING. You are what?

ATTENDANT. I am in attendance. Your Majesty called me?

KING. I did indeed.

QUEEN. We wanted to ask you what has become of that sweet flower, our darling daughter, the little Princess.

KING. We did indeed.

ATTENDANT. The little Princess?

KING. The little Princess indeed.

QUEEN. Our sweet and flower-like child.

ATTENDANT. (*In a matter-of-fact tone, in the same apathetic manner in which the* KING *speaks.*) Oh, the little Princess a few moments ago was carried off and is being

held for ransom by a band of cruel Pirates.

QUEEN. (*Shrieking.*) Carried off?!!!

KING. (*Disinterestedly.*) By a band of Pirates?

ATTENDANT. (*As if the matter were of no particular consequence.*) So I understand.

QUEEN. You let our darling daughter be carried off?!!!!

KING. Without preventing it?

ATTENDANT. (*In same tone.*) Did your Majesty wish me to prevent it?

KING. (*In an off-hand manner.*) Summon the Guard.

ATTENDANT. (*In a low voice.*) What ho! the guard.

(*The* GUARDS *enter, with spears, etc., and range themselves about the stage.*)

KING. (*To the* GUARD, *in a flat, matter-of-fact tone.*) Alack, our daughter has been stolen.

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) Oh, mercy! Put some feeling in it! Your daughter has been stolen!

KING. (*Nervously, shouting.*) Our stotter has been dolen!!

QUEEN. (*Nervously, shrieking.*) Our botter has been solen!!

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) No, no!!

KING. I mean, our soler has been botten!!!

QUEEN. I mean, our boler has been sotten!!!

DIRECTRESS. (*Entering and standing at the side of the stage.*) No! No!! No!!! (*To the audience.*) They are trying to tell you that their dotten has been soler—I mean, that their sotten has been—

GORDON. (*Sticking his head out.*) Say, "The kid has been kidnapped." You can't get that mixed. (*He disappears.*)

DIRECTRESS. No! No!! No!!!

KING. (*At the top of his voice.*) The nid has been kipnad!!!

QUEEN. The nap has been kipnid!!

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD. The kad has been napkinned!!

DIRECTRESS. (*Putting her hands over her ears and running out.*) This is terrible!!

KING. This is terrible!!

QUEEN. This is terrible!!

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD. This is terrible!!

GUARD. (*In unison.*) This is terrible!!!

DIRECTRESS. (*Outside. Screaming.*) Pull down that curtain!!!

(*The curtain descends with a bang. After a moment the* DIRECTRESS *appears before the curtain. She is beginning to appear wild and disheveled.*)

DIRECTRESS. Oh, I am so sorry. Things are getting worse and worse. I'm almost discouraged. I could just sit right down here and cry. I don't know how to apologize to you. I don't know what I can say. The play went beautifully in the rehearsals. I can't think what has got into the children. And then that curtain sticking— Oh, dear—oh, dear —oh, dear— (*She begins to cry softly.*)

(GORDON *enters and goes up to her and pats her kindly on the back.*)

GORDON. There—there—Miss Gray—

DIRECTRESS. Boo, hoo— Oh, I've lost my handkerchief.

GORDON. (*Kindly and generously.*) Here, take mine, Miss Gray. (*He hands her an immense red handkerchief, that even from a distance is evidently not a clean one. The* DIRECTRESS *takes the handkerchief without looking at it and wipes her eyes. It leaves a broad streak of dirt or paint on her face.*)

DIRECTRESS. Th-thank you, Gordon. (*She looks at the handkerchief.*) OOOh!! Gordon! What did you mean by giving me that thing!! Oh—boo—hoo— (*She runs off.*)

GORDON. (*Good-humoredly.*) Gee! She's finicky! (*To the audience.*) Miss Gray's kind of nervous. You've got to

excuse her. She gets discouraged too easy. Now I'll just entertain you awhile until she gets over crying and gets ready to go on with the play. (*He takes a pack of cards from his pocket.*) Now will someone just come up here on the stage and choose a card?

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) Gordon! Come back here at once and fix this curtain.

GORDON. (*To* DIRECTRESS.) Aw, Miss Gray, won't you let me do my card trick?

DIRECTRESS. (*Off-stage.*) No, I won't. Come here at once.

GORDON. (*To* DIRECTRESS. *Good-humoredly.*) All right. Just as you say. (*To audience.*) Sorry, folks. See you later. (GORDON *goes out.*)

(*After a moment the* DIRECTRESS *sticks her head out from behind the curtain.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*To the audience.*) I'm terribly sorry. There seems to be some trouble with the scenery. I'll have to ask you to be patient for just a moment. Gordon is trying to fix it. And he is so mechanically minded I think it won't take him long.

(*There is a terrific crash behind the curtain mingled with exclamations.*)

DIRECTRESS. Oh, my soul and conscience! (*She disappears.*)

(*Behind the curtain loud voices, then shouts and another terrific crash. The* DIRECTRESS *comes out before the curtain.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*To the audience.*) I'm terribly sorry. The next scene is supposed to be the Pirates' cave. We had a nice cave all ready. But that clumsy Gordon let it fall over and then he stepped right through it; and its ruined. I'm really very much disappointed in Gordon. He seemed to have such a mechanical mind. But I'm beginning to think he's just incompetent.

GORDON. (*Sticking his head out from behind the curtain.*) Who? Me?

DIRECTRESS. (*To* GORDON.) Yes, you!

GORDON. (*Good-humoredly.*) Aw—Miss Gray— (*He grins cheerfully and disappears.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*To the audience.*) Well, anyway, the scene is quite ruined. So we can't have a cave. We'll have to use the same scene. You'll have to imagine it's a pirate cave. (*To* GORDON.) Gordon, turn down the lights. (*To audience.*) Yes, it is a dark, gloomy cavern.

(*The curtain suddenly rises disclosing the garden scene blazing with light. In a semi-circle are ranged a number of small girls with long colored streamers attached to their shoulders. They represent little* SUNBEAMS. *They sing; and as they sing they wave the streamers.*)

SUNBEAMS. (*Singing shrilly at the tops of their voices.*)

We are happy little Sunbeams!
We are little rays of joy!
La—de—da—de-da—de—
La—de-da—de doy!
Happy little Sunbeams!
Little rays of joy!

DIRECTRESS. (*Turning toward them.*) No! No! No!

SUNBEAMS. (*Singing and waving their arms.*)

We are happy little Sunbeams!
We are little rays of joy!

DIRECTRESS. No! No! No! Children! Stop! This isn't where you come in.

SUNBEAMS. (*Still singing, but beginning to falter.*)

Happy little Sunbeams!
Little rays of joy!

DIRECTRESS. (*Shaking two or three of the nearest* SUNBEAMS. *Fiercely.*) Stop!!

(*The* SUNBEAMS *gaze at her stupidly for a moment, then all together begin to wail.*)

SUNBEAMS. Awwwww—waw—waw—!!!!

DIRECTRESS. Oh, my soul and conscience! (*To* GORDON.) Gordon! Let down the curtain! Instantly!

(*The curtain descends two or three feet, hesitates a second, then falls, hitting the* DIRECTRESS *on the top of the head. She gives a shriek and falls to the floor. The curtain descends the rest of the way, hiding the* DIRECTRESS *and the* SUNBEAMS, *whose wails, however, are still audible. After a moment* GORDON *appears before the curtain. He is grinning cheerfully.*)

GORDON. I'm terribly sorry. That old curtain just won't behave. I didn't mean to hit her on the head, honest I didn't. Anyhow we've got to stop the play for a few minutes until she gets over it. She ought to come to pretty soon. I just threw a pail of water over her. That's the best thing to do when people faint.—While we're waiting I'll just entertain you with that card trick. (*He takes a pack of cards from his pocket.*) Now if some little dumb-bell in the audience will come up here—

(*The* DIRECTRESS, *soaking wet and dripping water all over the stage, and also thoroughly angry, hurries out before the curtain, and, seizing* GORDON, *begins to shake him vigorously.*)

DIRECTRESS. You wretched boy—!!!

GORDON. (*Good-humoredly.*) Aw, Miss Gray— What have I done now?

DIRECTRESS. What have you done!!!! Look at me!!! (*Wringing water from her dress.*) Wasn't it enough to nearly kill me with your old curtain without trying to drown me?!—Now get off the stage before I lose my temper.

(*Sneezing.*) Achoo! Achoo!—Goodness, I'm taking cold. And it's all your fault. (*The wailing of the little* SUNBEAMS *behind the curtain grows louder.*) Gordon! Tell those wretched children that if they don't stop howling I'll come back and spank every one of them.

GORDON. I'll do that, Miss Gray. (GORDON *goes out.*)

DIRECTRESS. (*To the audience.*) I'm—achoo—terribly sorry. I'm taking cold. And I wish I'd never heard of this old play. But I suppose we've got to try to go on with it. If that dreadful Gordon can get the curtain up. We are going to skip to the last scene. The Princess has been found; and everybody is in the garden singing and rejoicing. (*To* GORDON.) Gordon! If you can get the curtain up raise it. Is everybody on the stage?—All right. Achoo!

(*The* DIRECTRESS *goes to one side as the curtain rises. The entire cast is gathered on the stage.*)

DIRECTRESS. Gordon! Turn on more lights.

GORDON. (*Off-stage.*) You bet.

(*There is a terrific explosion.* GORDON *falls backward to the middle of the stage. The lights go out.*)

GORDON. Ouch!!!

DIRECTRESS. Gordon! What have you done now?!!

GORDON. The dinged fuse blew out.

DIRECTRESS. Lower the curtain.

(*On the stage there is confusion. The little* SUNBEAMS *and* LETITIA *cry their loudest. Exclamations such as*—"Ow. I'm afraid!—Look out!—Stop pushing!—Wah! I wanna go home!—Look out, look out!" *There is a terrific crash and cries of alarm.*)

DIRECTRESS. Oh, this is terrible! Children! Children!

(*She dashes to the back of the stage. The curtain descends; and the auditorium lights go on.* GORDON, *calm and good-humored, appears before the curtain.*)

GORDON. I'm terribly sorry, folks. (*He grins good-*

naturedly.) The rest of the scenery just fell over. Miss Gray is having hysterics. The kids are all howling. The lights won't work. So we've just got to quit and call it a day, I guess. You don't mind. It wasn't much of a play anyhow. Well, (*Going to side of stage.*) guess I'll sign off, folks. Good night. (*He goes out.*)

(*If there is applause the curtain rises again and discloses the entire cast on the stage, bowing and smiling. The scenery is still in place and the lights are giving their usual illumination.* GORDON *is patting Miss Gray patronizingly on the back.*)

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE[1]

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By

ANNA JANE HARNWELL

1 Used by courtesy of the author. A fee of $3.00 for the right to produce this play must be paid to Mrs. Anna Jane Harnwell, "Brunnermill," Frederick, Md.

CHARACTERS

Miss Dora Bennet, *an inmate*
Miss Milly Jones, *a would-be inmate*
Mrs. Carter, *another inmate*
Miss Jordon, *the matron*
Lorenzo Hines, *the hero*
John, *who says nothing*

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

SCENE: *Interior of an Old Ladies' Home on a winter afternoon. The scene is in the bedroom of* MISS DORA BENNET, *one of the inmates.*

In the middle of back is a closed single door. On either side of the door stands a wash stand with pitcher, bowl and towels, etc. Next to these with heads against the back wall are two single iron beds. Next to the beds, are two small tables with night lights or candles and matches on them. Against the side walls and opposite each other are two bureaus with mirrors and drawers. Beside these near the front are two straight chairs.

A fireplace is supposed to be in the middle of stage just in front of footlights. A hearth plate, fire irons and coal scuttle indicate position of fireplace. On either side of fireplace, facing audience, are a couple of comfortable rocking chairs. The whole room is comfortable with the bare furnishings of a boarding house double room. An old engraving or two hangs on the walls. A chest covered with dark denim is at the foot of each bed.

When the curtain rises, MISS BENNET *is discovered sitting in the rocker at left of fireplace. She has a crutch beside her, showing she is lame, with which she pokes the fire from time to time. She is a grim raw-boned woman, with hair parted smoothly on her forehead. Her hair is iron gray and her face is wrinkled. She wears spectacles. After poking the fire she leans back in her chair, a discontented expression on her face. A knock is heard.*

MISS BENNET. Come in.

(*Door opens and* MRS. CARTER, *a thin little woman, pops her head in. She has snow-white hair, parted as is* MISS BENNET'S, *and drawn into a tight little knot at the back of her head.*)

MRS. CARTER. Would you like for me to bring my knittin' and set a while?

MISS BENNET. (*Cordially.*) Come in, Mrs. Carter, come in. I should say I would. You're as welcome as a bug to a chicken. I was just wishin' that I had someone to chat with. (MRS. CARTER *comes in, takes the other rocker and gets out her knitting.*) I do wish I could knit. But sewin' was all I ever did and now my eyes have give out so I can't do that. Except for glancin' at a book or paper I just set here and hold my hands the whole day.

Land! I can remember when I was dressmakin' for my livin', I thought it'd be a fine thing to set and do nothin', but I tell you it ain't what it's cracked up to be. I never did care much for readin'. They use such long words that by the time I've spelled 'em out, I've sort o' lost interest in what they're sayin'. How've you been, Mrs. Carter?

MRS. CARTER. (*Rocking.*) Pretty good. I tell you I feel mighty lucky when I hear old Mis' Nelson in the room next mine, groanin' with her rheumatism. To think o' all she's been through! Husband and two children killed in a cyclone—blown to death, you might say—then her eye bein' put out en havin' to wear a glass one—it don't match neither, I s'pose blue ones must be cheaper than brown ones—and then to be all doubled up with rheumatism! Yesterday she says was the last straw when she dropped her false teeth out the window, when she was lookin' out to see the fire engine. I told her that if it was true that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, He certainly had a crush on her.

(*A knock.*)

MISS BENNET. I wonder who that is. Come in.

(*Enter matron,* MISS JORDAN, *a wholesome, good-looking woman, neatly dressed in a black close-fitting gown, with white collar and cuffs.*)

MISS JORDAN. Good-afternoon! How cozy you two look. Well, Miss Bennet, I'm afraid I have some bad news for you. You'll not be able to have this room to yourself any longer. I admitted another guest this morning, and this is the only extra bed we have in the house.

MISS BENNET. (*Sourly.*) Oh, I knew it'd come, Miss Jordan, and I'm thankful for the comfort I've had. (*Brightening a little.*) P'raps now that I ain't in so much pain it'll not be so bad to have someone else here. I do hope she ain't one o' your slovenly kind.

MISS JORDAN. She comes with good recommendations and she is a very nice-looking old lady. I think you'll like her.

MISS BENNET. Well—I don't go much by folks' looks. It's deeds I judge 'em by. Handsome is as handsome does.

MRS. CARTER. (*Hopefully.*) 'Tain't so bad ef they ain't crochety. The first one I ever had was crochety. I had a terrible time with her, but I really enjoy Mis' Beggs, when she ain't cryin'. She's terrible mournful.

MISS JORDAN. You can't accuse Miss Jones of *that,* I'm sure. She seems like a very cheery little soul. She comes from a little town out in Iowa where she has been living with a niece, I believe. The niece died, but left enough money to Miss Jones, so she could come here to live.

MISS BENNET. (*Sharply.*) What did you say her name was?

MISS JORDAN. Jones. I don't remember the first name, but she is unmarried, I know. I remember she said Miss.

MISS BENNET. Humph! I ain't got any pleasant recollections with that name, but I suppose she ain't to blame for

that. 'Tain't likely it's any relation, for I never knew anyone from Ioway.

MISS JORDAN. She's gone for her trunk, but as soon as she comes I'll bring her up and introduce you. (*Exits.*)

MISS BENNET. (*Musingly.*) Jones! Jones! I'm sorry she's named that. It'll all the time remind me. Do you know if it hadn't been for a woman named Jones, I'd never be in any home for aged females!

MRS. CARTER. How's that?

MISS BENNET. It's a long story, but if it warn't for Milly Jones I'd likely be in a handsome home o' my own, with children, and money, and an automobile. Yes, ma'am! She was my best friend too. But I paid her back. If I didn't get 'em, neither did she!

MRS. CARTER. You don't say! What happened? Did she steal from you!

MISS BENNET. Well, in a way, she tried to, but I got ahead of her. We was girls together, Milly Jones and me, down in Waltham Center where we was both born and raised and we was always as thick as three in a bed till Lorenzo Hines come to town. He was a handsome fellow as you ever see, and as soon as him and me laid eyes on one another we was in love. He began to court me and of course Milly came over when he was there and as soon as she saw him she was crazy about him, too. So nothing would do but she must try and get him away from me. How that girl acted! She lived right across the street from me and she used to watch when he was coming and set on her gate and talk to him and ask him in, till the first thing I knew he was goin' to see her and not me at all.

We was almost engaged when she began flirtin'—the cat!—and when I saw he didn't care any more for me, I was pretty nigh crazy. I never knew quite how she got him, but it must ha' been by lies and flattery. You see, he was

a city fellow; just sent down by some rich firm in Chicago to look after some oil wells or something, and he was rich and mighty fascinatin'. I 'bout cried my eyes out when I saw how things were going, and I see him goin' to see her every night.

MRS. CARTER. What did he say?

MISS BENNET. Say! He didn't say nothin'! He just stopped comin'. When I met him on the street, he was as polite as could be, but just polite—which breaks a girl's heart, when a man's been tender like. Then one o' the boys told me his firm had sent for him to come back. The night before he went, I'll never forget. I saw him goin' to Milly's and I sat by my gate till midnight, when he come out, and I saw him kissin' her—it was bright moonlight—and sayin' soft things to her, and I just wanted to go over and tear her eyes out.

I cried all night, I remember, and then I got to thinkin' and thinkin' how I could get even. Finally someone told me Milly had a new ring. That settled me. I suppose I did wrong, but I determined if I didn't get him, she shouldn't. I got his address from one of the boys who knew the name of his firm, and I wrote him a letter, and told him Milly was a flirt and she was carryin' on with two or three fellows as soon as he left town, and I signed it— "Your well-wisher."

MRS. CARTER. Did he know who wrote it?

MISS BENNET. No, I don't suppose so. He hadn't ever seen my writin', so it might ha' been anyone in our town.

MRS. CARTER. What did he do? Did it break it off?

MISS BENNET. I never right knew just what happened. Only I noticed the postman stopped comin' to Milly's and she got to lookin' pretty sad like. So I always thought I broke it up.

MRS. CARTER. Did she ever say anything about it?

MISS BENNET. Not likely. I'd be the last person she'd speak to. You see, we hadn't spoken for some time before he left. I told her what I thought of her and after that there weren't no more to say, so it was the end so far as I was concerned. But one of the other girls told me Hines stopped writin' to her and that she was all broke up over it. Her father sold his place soon after that and they moved away, so I never heard any more of her. But I did hear that Hines was on the road to bein' a rich man, and if she'd left him alone I'd ha' been his wife and not rottin' out my days in an old people's home!

MRS. CARTER. (*Thinking the matter over.*) Of course, it might ha' been so in your case, but I didn't find that marriage kept *me* out o' here. Carter was a trouble from first to last, and I'd be blessin' anyone who had got him away from me. I wouldn't ha' wished him on my worst enemy. I tell you, Miss Bennet, there's more cases where the woman'd a' been happier if she'd been left to be an old maid, than there is o' old maids that'd 'a' been better off married. You see after all, you're only speakin' o' what you think would 'a' been. But I lived fifteen years with Carter! (*Feelingly.*)

MISS BENNET. That may be, Mrs. Carter, but Hines weren't no such man. I haven't seen him since, but I know then he was rich. And he had a fine lovin' disposition. Then I'd 'a' had children.

MRS. CARTER. You can't be certain o' that either, Miss Bennet, though I will say children do help you put up with a man. I got three children, all boys, but I can't abide their wives; so the boys pay for me livin' here, which suits better all round.

MISS BENNET. I know my children'd never been like that. They'd 'a' been like Hines, and I'd 'a' had a home o' my own and asked nothin' o' no one.

MRS. CARTER. Maybe, maybe, Miss Bennet. My three boys are mostly like their father, too, that's the trouble. They aren't so bad, but they were certainly plum cracked when it came to pickin' out wives, seems to me. (*A knock.*) That's Miss Jordan, now and the new boarder, so I'll run along.

(*Enter* MISS JORDAN *and* MISS JONES. *The latter is a dumpy little woman, with a shawl on and a thick veil over her face and bonnet. When she throws back the veil one sees traces of beauty in her round wrinkled face framed in white fuzzy hair.*)

MISS JORDAN. Don't let us hurry you, Mrs. Carter. I want you to meet our new guest, Miss Jones. (*They shake hands and* MRS. CARTER *goes toward the door.*)

MRS. CARTER. How'd do! Oh, I was just startin'. Good afternoon, Miss Bennet. (*Exits.*)

MISS JORDAN. Miss Jones, Miss Bennet. (MISS BENNET *grimly extends a bony hand which* MISS JONES *comes and shakes gingerly.*) Miss Bennet will show you where to put your things and which places belong to you. I'll send your trunk up shortly. Our regular second man is ill, so I've hired a new man to help John. He was such a poor old thing and needed the work, so that I took him on temporarily, but I'll have to ask you all to be patient with him and show him just how you like things done. The poor fellow came begging for work and he is a perfect wreck from drink and dissipation, but he was so needy that I hadn't the heart to refuse him a chance. I wanted to explain about him so you'd understand and overlook his appearance.

MISS BENNET. You're always doin' somethin' like that, Miss Jordan. Helpin' the poor. I'll show him.

MISS JORDAN. I knew you would, Miss Bennet. I'll run along now. I'll be back when they bring up the trunk. (*Exits.*)

MISS BENNET. You can have that chest o' drawers, Miss Jones, and those are your hooks. If there are any o' my things there I'll take 'em out when I get up. You see, I'm lame and I can't get about much.

(*During this speech,* MISS JONES, *standing near the right-hand bed, where she is laying off her wraps, suddenly finds something familiar in the voice, and with her veil thrown back, turns and scrutinizes the speaker, who is unconscious of any change.*)

MISS JONES. (*Suddenly.*) For Heaven's sake! Dora Bennet!

MISS BENNET. (*Peering at her, then sinking back aghast.*) Milly Jones! Humph! Well, you needn't be in any hurry to put away your things, for you and me ain't goin' to occupy no room together if I have to sleep in the cellar.

MISS JONES. That's so! (*Flaring up.*) But it's not for you to say, Dora Bennet. If you hadn't separated me from my future husband with your sneakin' lyin' letter, I'd 'a' been a comfortable rich woman and never seen the inside o' such a place as this. I wonder you dare to speak to me, whose life you ruined!

MISS BENNET. Hah! You! Whose was he first, I'd like to know? If it hadn't 'a' been for your forward ways, Miss, I'd 'a' been the one that wouldn't 'a' been here. You can put your bonnet right on again.

MISS JONES. Yes, I will, but not because *you* tell me to. When I tell that matron what a sneak and underhand woman you are, writin' unsigned letters and ruinin' honest girls' characters, I guess you'll be the one to be out o' a respectable home.

MISS BENNET. You do, do you? Well, you've got another think comin'. It ain't ten minutes sence I finished tellin' all about you and how it's all owin' to you that I ever came to this place.

MISS JONES. (*Beginning to cry.*) You've no right to blame me. I couldn't help it if he fell in love with me. I didn't drag him away by force. He came because he loved me—

MISS BENNET. (*Interrupting.*) You cat! You underhanded—

(*Just here the door opens and* MISS JORDAN *enters.*)

MISS JORDAN. Ladies! What's the matter?

MISS BENNET. The matter is, Miss Jordan, that I'll sleep in the cellar before I'll room with this woman. If it hadn't 'a' been for her behavior I'd never 'a' been here. And she knows it!

MISS JONES. (*Who is now sitting in the other rocker and crying softly.*) And I'll go to the poorhouse rather than room with her. I'd be afraid for my life.

MISS JORDAN. (*Rather bewildered.*) I'm very sorry. Don't feel so badly, Miss Jones. Miss Bennet, I'll try and adjust things so that Miss Jones can be put in with someone else. I feel sure some of the others will exchange.

(*Two men appear at the door. One is the regular man-of-all-work, the other is an old blear-eyed individual, with a scrubby gray beard. He shows plainly the marks of dissipation as well as age. He is dressed in ragged clothes which he wears, however, with a slight swagger.*)

MISS JORDAN. Oh, here you are, John. You needn't bring the trunk in here after all. Just let it set outside till we decide where Miss Jones will stay. Hines, you may bring in the coal, and when you are through in here, go to Room 21. (*To the women.*) I'll be back as soon as I can arrange things.

(MISS JORDAN *exits.* HINES *appears with scuttle of coal and approaches the fireplace.* MISS BENNET *has regarded him with interest ever since she heard his name.*)

MISS BENNET. Did she call you *Hines?*

HINES. (*Sets down scuttle and kneels in front of fireplace between the two women.*) Huh? Yes, lady. Hines is my name. There was a time when I was proud of it, too. But it hasn't brought me any luck. I've had my troubles, I can tell you. Buried two wives—fine women, too both of them—but with awful tempers. Bertha was the first; she died of twins. Children never seemed to agree with her. Then I had Mary. We got along pretty well till one day, when I'd a drop too much, she irritated me so that I just tapped her on the head, and she got in the police and while I was doing time, she left me, and refused to come back. Took the children too—four o' them—with her. Took Bertha's children too.

MISS BENNET. You mean you were arrested for beating your wife?

HINES. Oh, that wasn't anything. I were used to the law, so to speak. I'd done seven years for writing another man's name to a check, when I was hard up. And now I've come to this—fetchin' coal for a lot o' fussy old females!

MISS JONES. (*Who has stopped crying and been listening with horror to his tale.*) Hines! What—what was your first name?

HINES. (*With a leer.*) Lorenzo, ma'am: a fine name too. Could either o' you ladies— (*They both recoil in horror.*)

MISS BENNET. Was you ever in Waltham Center?

HINES. Hey? Waltham Center? Let me see; I've been in so many places, I forget. What sort o' place was it?

MISS JONES. (*Timidly.*) Did you know, Milly Jones, there?

HINES. (*Recollection coming back with a rush.*) Oh, yes, mighty pretty girl, Milly. Crazy about me. I thought I'd never shake her off. I remember, I got a letter o' some sort and that gave me an excuse to get rid of her. There

was a girl named Bennet there, too. She was mighty fond o' me, too. I always had a way with women. Is this all? As I was sayin' if either o' you ladies could spare a trifle—(*Both draw away from him.*) All right. Don't say I asked you. No offense meant so hope none was took, only you seemed so interested—I always had a way with the women, —all right, so long. (*Takes scuttle, now empty as he has put contents in the one already there, and backs out.*)

(*The two women sit and look at each other in silence for a moment, then* Miss Bennet *leans forward.*)

Miss Bennet. Milly—how did you know I wrote that letter?

Miss Jones. Lorenzo—(*shudder as she says the name*) sent it back to me, with a line sayin' that would explain why I wouldn't hear from him again. I recognized your handwritin' and I wrote and told him you wrote it and you was just jealous and it was all lies, but he sent that back unopened. The dreadful creature! Suppose I'd 'a' married him!

Miss Bennet. Milly, I never thought to say this, but I thank you for interferin' and sparin' me a life with—that —that—

Miss Jones. Dora—don't say no more. That letter you wrote was an inspiration from Providence. Seven years in the penitentiary!

Miss Bennet. Bein' knocked down when he was drunk! (*A pause.*) Milly, I think you'll find it real pleasant here. There's worse places than an old ladies' home. Take off your bonnet and tell me about your folks.

Miss Jones. Thank you, Dora, you're real kind. (*Takes off bonnet.*) It'll be just like old times. (*Sits down.*) You see after we left Waltham Center, we went to Montana—

(*As they sit talking* Miss Jordan *opens the door and is*

about to speak when she sees the two old ladies are in close and friendly conversation. She smiles and softly closes the door.)

CURTAIN

COLUMBINE[1]

By

COLIN CLEMENTS

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CHARACTERS

MINNIE
SALLY
AND ONE UNSEEN

COLUMBINE

If the room were not so dark we should see a bed pushed up into the corner. There is a window below it at the back and a door leading off right; below the door, before a small table on which stands a smoky lamp, Minnie is busily curling her hair. She sings as she works—a jerky sort of tune it is, and slightly off key.

MINNIE. (*Trying the iron.*) Darned hot! (*Suddenly.*)

"And when she was good,
She was very *very* good,
And when she was bad she was—"

Oh damn! Scorched it again . . . scorched it again! (*She combs out the remains of what might have been a curl.*)

"And when she was good,
She was ve—"

(*The door slowly opens and Sally enters.*)

MINNIE. Hello, Sal, O'thing. (*She turns.*) There—finished! How do I look from the neck up? Gee, I wish I had natural curly hair like yours . . . and yellow. Believe me it's an awful worry to a woman—keeping up her good looks. Say, hand me my red dress off'n the bed, will you, Sal? (*Minnie slips the dress on.*) You don't mind doing me up the back? Look, have you noticed . . . have you noticed? Fur trimming! It covers up the hole Jim burned in it with his old cigarette ashes. A man ain't got no right to make love and smoke at the same time anyhow. Look something like old Fifth Avenue I do now, eh? Imitation er*mine* . . . got it at Schultze's for only eighty-three cents, the

whole bunch of it. But you never could tell it from the real stuff, now could you . . . if you didn't come too close?

SALLY. I think it looks very nice.

MINNIE. I got off early to come home and sew it on. Told old man Grippen I had a headache and he let me off . . . that's what I like about a man for a boss, you can always work 'em. (*She smiles.*) Men are so darned easy! I *do* have to be dolled up for this dance tonight. It's down in Flannigan's hall and you know the bunch down there. Gee, a fellow won't have nothing to do with a girl that don't dress. That's the whole trouble with you, Sal, you don't dress. With you it's always black or white or gray; of course you do look cute, Sally, but like a . . . like a wall-flower, and no fellow wants to go round with a wall-flower. Say, you ought to see the fellow I've got for tonight . . . a drummer from St. Louis. I'm going to meet him down by the subway and he's going to take me in a Black and White taxi, just as if I was a regular jane. Little one, you ought to cop on to someone like that. You've certainly got the looks for it.

SALLY. But I don't want to go to . . . those places.

MINNIE. Those places! What do you want? A box at the opera and swell dinners at the Ritz? Well, so do I, but they don't come every day . . . not *every* day.

SALLY. I just want a home of my own like other girls have.

MINNIE. A home like other girls! My Gaud! Don't you know what that means for our kind? A dirty little back room somewhere with kids and dirt and smell and more than likely a drunken husband what beats you. Not for me! You don't think you're going to have things like them society girls that come snooping around here to find out how we live, do you? Limousines and footmen and dogs and furs and silk stockings for every day. You and me ain't born to it, that's all.

SALLY. We are! My mother used to . . . she had the best-looking ankles in the world and—

MINNIE. Them girls come poking around our places putting fool notions in our heads and inviting us to their settlement clubs, where we never meet anybody but our own kind. But they never invite us into *their* homes, do they? (*She lights a cigarette.*) Sal, you ought to go out more.

SALLY. I've been waiting.

MINNIE. Waiting! Oh—o. Say, you don't expect anybody to just come and find you waiting, do you? You sit here alone night after night, just sit. And when you go down to work, what have you got to think about during the whole day? What have you got to laugh about? What have you got to tell the other girls? Then, like everybody else, you keep getting older and older. What are you going to do then?

SALLY. I suppose everybody must come to the end . . . sometime.

MINNIE. (*Walking to the center of the room, turns.*) I don't want to think about that! I don't want to think about the . . . end! I'm young! I want to laugh! I want to feel! I want to live! I want to hear the music . . . and see the lights . . . and be part of the big crowd, just as long as I can. It's all there is to do—for me. (*She stands for a moment, and then with an hysterical little laugh turns toward* SALLY.) My Gaud . . . who's been hanging flowers on you? (SALLY'S *hand goes quickly over the white rose at her belt.*) Sal, who's been pinning white roses on you?

SALLY. It's from a boy who—

MINNIE. A boy! (*She comes closer.*) Sally . . . don't tell me you're in love with a man!

SALLY. I think . . . yes, I *am* in love.

MINNIE. You!—You in love! (*She sinks into a chair.*) Gaud, this is the last straw! Now I'll have to stay home

nights and chaperon you!

SALLY. I've hoped and waited and waited, and now—

MINNIE. And missed a lot of fun just waiting for . . . nothing.

SALLY. And at last he has come . . . love has come.

MINNIE. Poor little mouse. Love! Oh, if you only knew what I know. Love ain't made for our kind.

SALLY. Why, love is for everybody . . . every girl dreams of having a home all of her own sometime.

MINNIE. Do you know what that means? It means frying greasy potatoes and washing clothes . . . and getting old and hard and ugly. It's all there is for us, just that. I'm going to get away from it all; I'm going to be free until . . . until the end.

SALLY. But if a man loves a woman—

MINNIE. He doesn't marry her. Men don't marry women they *really* love.

SALLY. Oh!

MINNIE. The only reason men ever get married is so they won't have to wash their own socks!

SALLY. No . . . no . . . no.

MINNIE. It takes more than love to get over the hard places . . . it takes more than *love* to keep alive. Romance has to be fed with three square meals a day, take it from me, or it don't last long. Oh, it's all right in books, but it don't work out in real life. I've seen it tried again and again and again. It's filthy.

SALLY. No! Real love is clean . . . clean as this white rose.

MINNIE. (*Taking the rose.*) As this white rose. Who knows . . . even it may have a worm eating at its heart. White rose, grown in a greenhouse, sheltered from the dirt of the city . . . that's what it is. But you don't find 'em growing down on these dirty streets and black holes where

we live, Sally; you don't. Maybe if you and me had always been taken care of and lived in a clean place where there was sun and flowers, instead of a place like this . . . where it's always dark and smelly and noisy—well, perhaps we would be different too. (*She sighs.*) But we weren't, and it's too late to change now. There's nothing to do but just go on as we are until—just keep on as we are. Love! It ain't real, Sally. (*She pauses.*) I wish . . . I wish to Gaud I could believe it was! (*She rises and with a little shudder throws the flower on the table. She walks slowly toward the door. Turning.*) Who's the fellow?

SALLY. A boy . . . Harlequin.

MINNIE. Harlequin what?

SALLY. Just Harlequin, that's all.

MINNIE. Just Harlequin . . . sounds suspicious.

SALLY. He's wonderful!

MINNIE. Of course you'd think so until tomorrow . . . or the day after.

SALLY. I shall think so always. (*Very low.*) And tonight . . . tonight he's coming with the new moon to take me away from all this . . . to a place where there is always sunshine and flowers and birds. The sort of a place you said—

MINNIE. But—is he—

SALLY. And we're going to live in a little house with hollyhocks against the red brick walls and little green boxes of red geraniums at all the windows and dotted swiss curtains inside and—

MINNIE. Hm-m. Sounds like stories they tell about Heaven. Say, where, where, did you meet this guy—Harlequin?

SALLY. In the Park first . . . almost a week ago.

MINNIE. Oh, that's what's been the matter with you lately. Why didn't you tell me about it?

SALLY. You wouldn't have believed me.

MINNIE. I don't . . . not all that stuff about hollyhocks against red brick walls and the rest of it. (*She laughs.*) What's he do?

SALLY. He's a painter . . . and he sings songs and he made some sketches of me in the park one day and sang me a little song and—

MINNIE. You mean he's an artist?

SALLY. Yes.

MINNIE. That finishes it, worst kind . . . them artists. Regular bums; no money, no nothing but a lot of foolish ideas and a lot of green paint. Oh, I know that sort. I fell for one once myself. Gee, he was swell to look at . . . long curly hair and one of them soft bow ties and everything, you know. Gaud but he was han'some; he made cartoons for a Sunday paper. But come to find out he already had a wife, and three kids beside. (*She laughs.*) "And dotted swiss curtains inside"!

SALLY. But he isn't a bum! He works . . . he works in a florist shop during the mornings and in the afternoons he paints—

MINNIE. Oh, in a flores' shop. Thus the flowers, eh! Stingy . . . with only giving you one rose. Say, if I'd a fellow what worked in a greenhouse I'd go to bed every night with roses at my head and lilies at my feet.

SALLY. He paints pictures.

MINNIE. The struggling sort . . . bah!

SALLY. He's sold some of them too . . . and saved the money. That's how we're going to build the little place in the country and live together, and work together . . . until the end. One can't be afraid that way, Minnie.

MINNIE. I used to get like that too . . . pipe dreams.

SALLY. Only you think so. You know my mother used to be a dancer. I always wanted to be one too, but my father

thought millinery was better . . . that's how we happened to come to New York. But we all loved the country . . . especially my mother—she liked the birds so. My father used to call her his little dream girl, and then after she . . . died, I became his little dream girl—that's the reason I believe in dreams . . . and dreams *do* come true.

MINNIE. You mean—

SALLY. Dreams do come true. And so tonight . . . tonight with the new moon, Harlequin is coming to take away his Columbine.

MINNIE. Who's that?

SALLY. Why . . . why, that's what he calls me!

MINNIE. (*Throwing the hat, which she has been bending into shape, down on the bed.*) He's coming here? Tonight? Then I'm staying home tonight!

SALLY. You . . . staying . . . home?

MINNIE. Straight, Sally . . . I don't like fellows who go around drawing pictures of girls in the park, specially you.

SALLY. But he doesn't draw every girl's picture. He was eating his lunch . . . and so was I. That's how it all began.

MINNIE. Oh! And then—

SALLY. He sang a little song for me. A little song I've known ever since I was a child. And when he sang it seemed as if I had known him forever and ever.

MINNIE. Yes, I know. You fell for him . . . fell for him hard. And now he wants to come and . . . carry you off, in the night!

SALLY. But I want to go! He was perfectly willing to come in broad daylight. But night . . . night seemed more sort of romantic. It was me who suggested his coming at night.

MINNIE. You, Sally, you?

SALLY. (*Coming forward.*) Yes, me . . . and I'm not ashamed of it! Every girl wants romance. Every girl wants

the man she loves . . . and I've found my man! I'm going to help him—work for him, live for him, love him—always. I suppose every man plays around with girls; they are all alike to him until he comes to the right one . . . the one that is meant to be his mate and then . . . then she's got to let him know it. Men! Why, they're all alike . . . just big, stupid boys. Every man needs a woman to take care of him. And I've found my man!

MINNIE. (*Takes* SALLY'S *hand.*) I'm not really such a bad sort, Sally. I've seen a lot more than you have, that's all. Why, you're only a kid. I'm not going to let you go through what I have. After all, it ain't worth the candle. Perhaps there is something in dreams . . . I wish I could believe so.

SALLY. I know there is!

MINNIE. That's the reason I'm going to stay home with you tonight . . . I want you to go on believing in dreams. (*She gives a sigh of resignation as she sits down. After a long pause.*) They was going to have a real jazz band. (*Another long pause.*) I wonder if the drummer from St. Louis is still waiting for me!

SALLY. (*Walks over and puts her hand on* MINNIE'S *shoulder.*) I don't want you to stay here with me tonight . . . I want to be alone . . . all alone when he comes for me. He's not at all what you think he is. Oh, I've had men try to flirt with me, and try to talk to me—and all that. I know that kind. But a woman can always tell a good man from a bad one.

MINNIE. I wonder? I think only a very bad woman can tell a good man from a bad one. (*Pause.*) Sally, don't you know that a woman is what goes away and lives with a man . . . without being married to him?

SALLY. (*Backing away.*) Oh! You didn't think that of me! You couldn't think that!

MINNIE. What else could I think?

SALLY. But we are going to be married, like anybody else.

MINNIE. Who suggested that?

SALLY. Why, Harlequin, of course. We're to be just Harlequin and Columbine forever . . . so please go away and let me be alone when he comes. You *shan't* spoil it! Nobody shall.

MINNIE. (*With a shrug of her shoulders.*) Of course— (*She rises.*) Oh, well if you want to be alone. But he won't come for you. Hell, he won't come. (*She puts on her hat.*) You'll just sit here waiting and waiting, until you're all tired out, and then you'll go to bed and cry till your poor little heart is broke. I waited for a fellow once! You see I'm still waiting!

SALLY. You mean you—

MINNIE. Yes. We was going to live in a flat and have a baby grand piano, and a imitation palm with red tissue-paper around the pot and all that. I never saw him again. (*She laughs as she walks toward the door.*)

SALLY. But Harlequin *will* come.

MINNIE. Maybe. But not to take you to a little red house with hollyhocks! He'll want to postpone that until next week. Wait and see. (*She starts to go.*)

SALLY. (*Running to her.*) Goodbye, Minnie.

MINNIE. Naw, not goodbye . . . just so long. So long, Sally, poor little kid. (*She turns at the door.*) Say, if you don't mind, stay on your own side and weep. I hate sleeping on a damp pillow!

(SALLY *closes the door softly after* MINNIE, *turns, and walks toward the table. The moon begins to peep in at the back window. The room grows brighter. She picks up the rose from the table and kisses it, then moves toward the window where she stands waiting as the moon slowly rises. After a*

long pause Sally, with a little catch in her throat, walks toward the center of the room. Slowly she pulls the petals from the rose and lets them fall through her fingers one by one. The lamp suddenly flickers and goes out.)

A Voice. (*Distant at first, but coming nearer and nearer, is heard.*)

I will give you the keys of my heart,
We shall be married until death do us part,
Lady, will you walk.
Lady, will you talk,
Lady, will you walk and talk with me?

(*Someone is running up the stairs outside. Sally turns toward the door which flies open as the curtain falls.*)

THE RETURN OF HARLEQUIN

By

COLIN CLEMENTS

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CHARACTERS

COLUMBINE
HARLEQUIN
AND STILL ANOTHER

THE RETURN OF HARLEQUIN

We are in a little room with gray walls and green woodwork. At the back, hung with cream-colored curtains embroidered in bright yarns, are two windows through which we catch just a glimpse of a red brick wall with hollyhocks against it. At the right a small door leads into another room; at the left a kettle is singing softly on the wide hearth. Near the center of the room there is a small table with tea things on it and a large comfortable chair drawn up close to it; a carved chest is pushed up under the window nearest the fireplace. A door at the back leads into the garden.

The door at the back opens and COLUMBINE *trips in. Lightly she flings her shawl down on the chest and moves toward the table where she stands for a moment. She pushes back her golden hair from her brow with a little sigh; then, as if trying for the moment to forget, she runs to the hearth and swings the kettle away from the fire.*

COLUMBINE. Mr. Kettle, you always sing and sing and sing . . . I used to know somebody just like you. Always singing. Such lovely songs, too! He's coming back to us some day. (*She pauses.*) Yes, he's coming back. (*With a little spontaneous air and dance.*) Some day, some day . . . not so very far away. (*With a merry little laugh she quickly disappears into the room at the right. Her voice comes back.*)

"Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock,

If the bough breaks the cradle will fall
And down will come baby, cradle and all."

(*After a short silence the door at the back slowly opens.* HARLEQUIN *enters. He wears a soldier's uniform. He stands for a moment looking about him strangely, almost as if he were afraid, then lets his knapsack slowly slip from his shoulder. He sees the shawl on the chest and with a little exclamation tenderly picks it up and buries his face in it. Then, slowly shaking his head, he lets it fall out of his hands. He starts toward the fireplace, stops, and sinks into the chair.* COLUMBINE *enters. Quietly and prettily she puts a bit of tea in the pot and starts toward the fire. She sees* HARLEQUIN. *The teapot falls from her hands.*)

COLUMBINE. Harlequin!

HARLEQUIN. (*Jumping up and taking both her hands.*) Columbine!

COLUMBINE. You are still in your uniform! (*With a little giggle.*) Oh, Harlequin! (*They embrace.*)

HARLEQUIN. And I thought I had forgotten how to . . . to kiss!

COLUMBINE. Oh, you do it beautifully. There, that just shows what thinking does! Why, you couldn't forget how to . . . to kiss, Harlequin. Oh . . . I've got the most wonderful secret in the world for you!

HARLEQUIN. (*Holding up his hands.*) Not until I've had more kisses . . . oh, a lot more!

COLUMBINE. (*Running around the table and shaking her finger at him.*) Just three! Here and here and here. (*She leans across the table.*)

HARLEQUIN. (*Leaning over, after each kiss.*) There, and there, and there. Delectable! And I thought I had forgotten how! One forgets such a lot of things out there!

COLUMBINE. (*Backing away from him.*) What makes you

look like that, Harlequin? I've never seen you look like that before. Perhaps it is the uniform! Yes, I'm sure it must be the uniform. (*Her tone changes.*) Why, yes . . . of course it is the uniform. Oh, Harlequin, you look just like— (*She begins to laugh.*) Harlequin, you look just exactly! For all the world! Like a man!

HARLEQUIN. That's the reason I got so tired of it. I was just like everybody else. All alike . . . millions of us!

COLUMBINE. Not all alike to me! Not at all!

HARLEQUIN. But you were so far away . . . and away . . . and away across the sea.

COLUMBINE. Right on the other side of the world . . . but after all, just around the corner!

HARLEQUIN. Silly little Columbine, the world doesn't have corners!

COLUMBINE. (*Thoughtfully.*) No . . . isn't that too bad! Oh, if the world only *did* have corners!

HARELQUIN. It's just as well. Everybody would be knocking their shins if it had.

COLUMBINE. Yes . . . yes, I suppose things as they *are* are always best. (*She snuggles down in the arm of his chair.*) But I must tell you my news—

HARLEQUIN. I know, it's all about grocers' bills and butchers' bills or—

COLUMBINE. Not at all! It's all about—

HARLEQUIN. Or perhaps one of my paintings sold while I was away or—

COLUMBINE. No . . . no. It's about—

HARLEQUIIN. (*Puts his arm around her.*) But it can wait. I just want to talk about you. I just want to see you and hear you and be with you . . . and forget all the rest of the world. Oh, I used to get so lonesome for you and—

COLUMBINE. I waited for you always! (*She looks anxiously at the door right, her voice drops.*) I used to be

afraid sometimes . . . afraid you would never come back again. (*She covers her eyes.*) People used to tell such horrible things. Things that just couldn't . . . couldn't be true!

HARLEQUIN. Ah, but they were true . . . they were!

COLUMBINE. But out of it all you have come back to me. Back to me, Harlequin!

HARLEQUIN. Back home but—

COLUMBINE. (*Giving him a little hug.*) Yes . . . yes! Home again after the war!

HARLEQUIN. But I am afraid I am not the same Harlequin I was before I went away. I have been away so long.

COLUMBINE. So dreadfully long.

HARLEQUIN. When I saw all the other fellows getting letters day after day I used to wish you knew how to write.

COLUMBINE. Alas, I can only dance . . . and trim silly little hats! (*She dances as she sings.*)

Silly little hats, silly little hats, silly little hats for ladies:
Who'll buy a hat, a nice little hat, a silly little hat for his lady?
For I'm a milliner, sir.
A willy little, nilly little, silly little milliner, sir!

HARLEQUIN. (*Walks toward the fireplace, laughing.*) It doesn't matter now . . . I couldn't have read your letters if you had sent them.

COLUMBINE. No, for you can only paint and sing!

HARLEQUIN. (*Clenching his fists.*) And fight!

COLUMBINE. Oh, but I'm sure you sing much better than you fight!

HARLEQUIN. (*Coming to attention.*) No!

COLUMBINE. Can you really fight as well as you can sing? Oh, what a wonderful soldier you are, my Harlequin!

HARLEQUIN. I think I've forgotten how to sing.

COLUMBINE. Forgotten how to sing! You! Oh, no . . . no.

HARLEQUIN. I used to try . . . but my heart wasn't in my songs. My heart was here with you. Oh, I longed for you . . . I used to gaze up at the stars and wonder if you were looking at them too.

COLUMBINE. I was . . . the very same stars.

HARLEQUIN. I gazed and gazed into the sky until my eyes were full of stars and my heart was full of you . . . you! Then, when there was fighting, I was glad for you . . . glad you couldn't see and hear. Oh . . . it was—hell!

COLUMBINE. That is over now . . . past.

HARLEQUIN. I wonder? Past, you say! When one has walked hand in hand with death; when one has looked death in the face so long that one has almost forgotten what life is like? You . . . home . . . everything, it's all like some strange dream. I can't believe I'm here.

COLUMBINE. But you are! And we shall begin all over again.

HARLEQUIN. Begin all over again? No, experience doesn't leave us where it found us. If it did we would remain beautifully young forever!

COLUMBINE. When one is alive . . . life is life!

HARLEQUIN. In so short a time the world has grown very, very old.

COLUMBINE. Old? The world will never grow old so long as there is youth!

HARLEQUIN. Youth went to war . . . and has come back from the war very, very old.

COLUMBINE. There will always be youth! And you, Harlequin, will find it again.

HARLEQUIN. Oh, if I could only play the clown once more . . . just for a little while!

COLUMBINE. You will. Oh, you will! My Harlequin. To-

night, we shall watch the new moon climb over the garden wall . . . and you will sing:

Lady, will you walk,
Lady, will you talk,
Lady, will you walk and talk with me?

(*She runs to the chest and brings out his Harlequin costume. She holds it up.*) Look, Harlequin!

HARLEQUIN. Why, it's my old—

COLUMBINE. You must wear it. (HARLEQUIN *slips into the costume.*) Now you are my real, *real* Harlequin again!

HARLEQUIN. (*With a little sigh of satisfaction.*) Well, it does seem good to get back into "mufti." (*Slowly.*) But this doesn't make me the Harlequin I used to be . . . just underneath is my uniform. I am still a sol—

COLUMBINE. Oh come, it's the outside that counts! Sometimes we laugh to keep back the tears. Life is like that. It's the outside that really counts!

HARLEQUIN. Oh, poor little Columbine, if you only knew!

COLUMBINE. Some things it is best to put out of our lives.

HARLEQUIN. I've tried to forget . . . God, I've tried!

(*He sinks into the big chair and covers his face with his hands;* COLUMBINE *slides down in front of him.*)

COLUMBINE. We used to have such fun together, you and I, and now we've got—

HARLEQUIN. Yes . . . yes! But we thought then that there was nothing else to do in life but work and play . . . and we made play of our work. *Then* life was wonderful! Just one long beautiful May party for both of us. Columbine, if you only knew of the thousands and thousands of people who work and work and work day in and day out, year in and year out . . . all their monotonous lives, work just to keep alive. People who don't know how to play. People who don't even know how to smile.

COLUMBINE. I know, dear.

HARLEQUIN. And there are some whose only joy in life was love for another . . . then war came—and killed the ones they loved. Columbine, there is something we owe to those who have been left behind.

COLUMBINE. Yes, Harlequin, that's just it. So many people have grown old in this war . . . older than years could ever make them. If we can only help them find youth again! Yes, so many people have forgotten how to laugh. Oh, if we can only teach them how to laugh again! If we can only make them forget! You can do it, Harlequin.

HARLEQUIN. Forget . . . it is the starting all over again that is hardest. The starting all over again! To begin where one left off! Perhaps I could learn to sing again, perhaps I could make others laugh again . . . if only there was someone to help. Someone who never knew what war meant, someone untouched by days of sorrow. Out there I used to dream of a little Harlequin . . . one who belonged to just you and me.

COLUMBINE. (*Springing up.*) That's just exactly what I've wanted to tell you for—

HARLEQUIN. (*Looking straight before him.*) A little one to care for . . . to live for. Oh, then I could sing again!

COLUMBINE. (*Very low.*) Then you will sing, Harlequin; you will sing:

"Jammo ncappa jammo, ja . . .
— Funi cului—funi cu—"

HARLEQUIN. (*Still looking straight before him.*) But all life was so remote . . . remote. Some nights when it was very cold and wet and dark and the stars were hid, I used to wonder if you wouldn't tire of waiting for me; if you would still be here when I came home again. Today when I

came back I was almost afraid to come in . . . afraid that I would find you gone!

COLUMBINE. Harlequin, how could you imagine such things?

HARLEQUIN. (*Putting out his hand to hers.*) Did you speak, Columbine?

COLUMBINE. Harlequin, I would wait for you forever, just as I waited ever since the world began—until you came into my life.

HARLEQUIN. I know . . . I know, but such terrible thoughts came to me out there . . . such terrible things. I believe one gets a little mad. I used to think that perhaps you would grow tired of waiting and fall in love with someone else. Foolish, wasn't it? And still—

COLUMBINE. Oh, I *am* in love with someone else!

HARLEQUIN. (*On his feet.*) Columbine!

COLUMBINE. He's very, very small . . . such a little clown!

HARLEQUIN. What does it matter what size he is!

COLUMBINE. And he's so pink and white!

HARLEQUIN. Or his color!

COLUMBINE. And he looks . . . oh, he looks just like his father!

HARLEQUIN. (*Steps toward her.*) Then you mean . . . you mean you have grown away from me? That you no longer love me?

COLUMBINE. Love you? With my whole heart, Harlequin . . . all except just one little pinch, this much! (*She indicates.*) He's so tiny he couldn't really hold any more love, you know.

HARLEQUIN. Oh, you can't do that! You have got to love one or the other. You can't . . . you can't . . . you can't love two men!

COLUMBINE. Men! But—

HARLEQUIN. I shall go away again and—

COLUMBINE. Harlequin! (*Then she understands and laughs and laughs until the tears roll down both her cheeks.*) Oh, you dear old stupid! You can't go away and leave him . . . he is so very tiny. Besides, I brought him here for you, dear. He came with a new moon!

HARLEQUIN. You mean . . . you mean there *is* a little Harlequin . . . *our* little Harlequin? (COLUMBINE *nods.*) Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you tell me the very min—

COLUMBINE. I tried, to, but—

HARLEQUIN The very minute I came in?

COLUMBINE. You wouldn't let me . . . besides, he is sleeping and little Harlequins can't be wakened from their naps. No-o-o, not even by papa Harlequins!

HARLEQUIN. (*Takes her in his arms.*) Blessed little mother! Do let me have one peep at him!

COLUMBINE. (*Breaking away from him and shaking her finger knowingly.*) On one condition.

HARLEQUIN. Anything!

COLUMBINE. That you will sing for him tonight, out under the trees . . . as the moon climbs over the garden wall.

HARLEQUIN. Yes—yes—yes!

COLUMBINE. One peep!

HARLEQUIN. Together! (*He holds out his arms.*)

Lady, will you walk,
Lady, will you talk,
Lady, will you walk and talk with me?

COLUMBINE. (*Taking his hand.*)

Yes, I will walk,
Yes, I will talk,
Yes, I will walk and talk with thee.

(*Very quietly they tiptoe toward the room at the right.*)

COLUMBINE. (*Turns and whispers.*) Harlequin, I'm sure he is going to sing songs beautifully . . . Why, when he cries he has the most wonderful voice in the whole world!

(*They disappear into the other room as the curtain falls.*)

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